PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

JULY, 1948

HANNAH ARENDT
The Concentration Camps

JEAN COCTEAU
The Human Voice

NICOLA CHIAROMONTE
Malraux and the Demons of Action

HUMPHREY SLATER
London Letter

VERNON WATKINS
The Windows of Breath (a poem)

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THE SORCERER by Honoré Daumier. The original, in the Delius collection, is in pen and wash.

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Hannah Arendt

THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

"The SS has made the camp the most totalitarian society in existence up to now."—David Rousset.

There are three possible approaches to the reality of the concentration camp: the inmate's experience of immediate suffering, the recollection of the survivor, and the fearful anticipation of those who dread the concentration camp as a possibility for the future.

Immediate experience is expressed in the reports which "record but do not communicate" things that evade human understanding and human experience; things therefore that, when suffered by men, transform them into "uncomplaining animals" (*The Dark Side of the Moon,* New York, 1947). There are numerous such reports by survivors; only a few have been published, partly because, quite understandably, the world wants to hear no more of these things, but also because they all leave the reader cold, that is, as apathetic and baffled as the writer himself, and fail to inspire those passions of outrage and sympathy through which men have always been mobilized for justice, for "Misery that goes too deep arouses not compassion but repugnance and hatred" (Rousset).

Der SS-Staat by Eugen Kogon and *Les Jours de notre mort* by David Rousset are products of assimilated recollection. Both authors have consciously written for the world of the living, both wish to make themselves understood at any cost, and both have cast off the insane contempt for those "who never went through it," that in the direct reports so often substitutes for communication. This conscious good will is the only guaranty that those who return will not, after a brief period of sullen resentment against humanity in general, adapt themselves to the real world and become once more the exact same unsuspecting fools that they were when they entered the camps. Both books are indispensable for an understanding not only of the con-

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centration camps, but of the totalitarian regime as a whole. They become useless and even dangerous as soon as they attempt a positive interpretation—Kogon because he cites apparent historical precedents and believes that the camps can be understood psychologically, Rousset because he seeks the consolation of an "extreme experience" in a kind of suffering which, strictly speaking, no longer permits of experience, and thus arrives at a meaningless affirmation of life that is extremely dangerous because it romanticizes and transfigures what must never under any circumstances be repeated on this earth.[1] What is really true, on the contrary, was recently remarked by Isaac Rosenfeld in *The New Leader* (February 14, 1948): "We still don't understand what happened to the Jews of Europe, and perhaps we never will. . . . By now we know all there is to know. But it hasn't helped . . . as there is no response great enough to equal the facts that provoked it. There is nothing but numbness, and in the respect of numbness we . . . are no different from the murderers who went ahead and did their business and paid no attention to the screams."

Fearful anticipation is the most widespread and perhaps the only fitting approach to the reality of the concentration camp. It certainly has a great deal to do with the attitudes of men under the totalitarian terror, although it always seems to go hand in hand with a remarkable and very characteristic uncertainty which impedes both rebellion and any clear, articulated understanding of the thing feared. Kogon reports: "Only a very, very few of those who entered a concentration camp for the first time had the slightest idea . . . of what awaited them. [Some] were prepared for the worst. But these ideas were always nebulous; the reality far exceeded them." The reason for the uncertainty was precisely that this reality was utterly incredible and inconceivable. In totalitarian regimes, uncertainty as well as fear is manufactured and fostered by the propagandistic treatment of the institution of terror. "There was hardly anything connected with the SS that was not kept secret. The biggest secret of all was the routine of the concentration camps . . . whose only purpose was to spread an anonymous terror of a general political character" (Kogon). Concentration camps and everything connected with them are systematically publicized and at the same time kept absolutely secret. They are used as a threat, but all actual reports about them are suppressed or denounced as fantastic.

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It is not surprising that those who made terror the actual foundation of their power should know how to exploit it through publicity and propaganda. The surprising thing is that the psychological and political effects of this propaganda could survive the collapse of the Nazi regime and the opening up of the concentration camps. One would think that the eye-witness reports and, to an even greater degree, the works of ordered recollection which substantiate one another and speak directly to the reader, in Rousset's case most persuasively, should have punctured the propagandist claim that such things were absurd horror stories. This, as we all know, is not the case. Despite overwhelming proofs, anyone speaking or writing about concentration camps is still regarded as suspect; and if the speaker has resolutely returned to the world of the living, he himself is often assailed by doubts with regard to his own truthfulness, as though he had mistaken a nightmare for reality.

This doubt of people concerning themselves and the reality of their own experience only reveals what the Nazis have always known: that men determined to commit crimes will find it expedient to organize them on the vastest, most improbable scale. Not only because this renders all punishments provided by the legal system inadequate and absurd; but because the very immensity of the crimes guarantees that the murderers who proclaim their innocence with all manner of lies will be more readily believed than the victims who tell the truth. The Nazis did not even consider it necessary to keep this discovery to themselves. Hitler circulated millions of copies of his book in which he stated that to be successful, a lie must be enormous—which did not prevent people from believing him as, similarly, the Nazis' proclamations, repeated ad nauseam, that the Jews would be exterminated like bedbugs (i.e., with poison gas), prevented anybody from *not* believing them.

There is a great temptation to explain away the intrinsically incredible by means of liberal rationalizations. In each one of us, there lurks such a liberal, wheedling us with the voice of common sense. We attempt to understand elements in present or recollected experience that simply surpass our powers of understanding. We attempt to classify as criminal a thing which, as we all feel, no such category was ever intended to cover. What meaning has the concept of murder when we are confronted with the mass production of corpses? We

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attempt to understand the behavior of concentration camp inmates and SS men psychologically, when the very thing that must be realized is that the psyche (or character) *can* be destroyed even without the destruction of the physical man; that, indeed, as Rousset convincingly shows, psyche, character, or individuality seem under certain circumstances to express themselves only through the rapidity or slowness with which they disintegrate. The end result in any case is inanimate men, i.e., men who can no longer be psychologically understood, whose return to the psychologically or otherwise intelligibly human world closely resembles the resurrection of Lazarus—as Rousset indicates in the title of his book. All statements of common sense, whether of a psychological or sociological nature, serve only to encourage those who think it "superficial" to "dwell on horrors" (Georges Bataille, in *Critique*, January 1948).

If it is true that the concentration camps are the most consequential institution of totalitarian rule, "dwelling on horrors" would seem to be indispensable for the understanding of totalitarianism. But recollection can no more do this than can the uncommunicative eyewitness report. In both these genres there is an inherent tendency to run away from the experience; instinctively or rationally, both types of writer are so much aware of the terrible abyss that separates the world of the living from that of the living dead, that they cannot supply anything more than a series of remembered occurrences that must seem just as incredible to those who relate them as to their audience. Only the fearful imagination of those who have been aroused by such reports but have not actually been smitten in their own flesh, of those who are consequently free from the bestial, desperate terror which, when confronted by real, present horror, inexorably paralyzes everything that is not mere reaction, can afford to keep thinking about horrors. Such thoughts are useful only for the perception of political contexts and the mobilization of political passions. A change of personality of any sort whatever can no more be induced by thinking about horrors than by the real experience of horror. The reduction of a man to a bundle of reactions separates him as radically as mental disease from everything within him that is personality or character. When, like Lazarus, he rises from the dead, he finds his personality or character unchanged, just as he had left it.

Nor can horror or thinking about horrors become a basis for a

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political community or a party in the narrower sense. Attempts have failed to create a European elite with a program of inter-European understanding on the basis of the common experience of the concentration camp, much in the same way that similar attempts after the First World War failed to draw political consequences from the experience of the front-line soldier. In both cases it developed that the experiences themselves could impart only nihilistic platitudes, such as: "Victim and executioner are alike ignoble; the lesson of the camps is the brotherhood of abjection; if you haven't acted with the same degree of ignominy, it's only because you didn't have time . . . but the underlying rot that rises, rises, rises, is absolutely, terrifyingly the same" (Rousset). Political consequences like postwar pacifism followed from the universal fear of war, not from experience of the war. An insight, led and mobilized by fear, into the structure of modern war would have led not to a pacifism without reality, but to the view that the only acceptable ground for modern war is to fight against conditions under which we no longer wish to live—and our knowledge of the camps and torture chambers of totalitarian regimes has convinced us only too well that such conditions are possible. An insight into the nature of totalitarian rule, directed by our fear of the concentration camp, might serve to devaluate all outmoded political shadings from right to left and, beside and above them, to introduce the most essential political criterion for judging the events of our time: Will it lead to totalitarian rule or will it not?

In any case fearful anticipation has the great advantage that it dispels the sophistical-dialectical interpretations of politics, which all rest on the superstition that some good can come out of evil. Such dialectical acrobatics retained at least an appearance of justification as long as the worst evil that man could inflict on man was murder. But murder, as we know today, is still a limited evil. The murderer who kills a man who must die in any event, moves within the familiar realm of life and death, between which there is a necessary relation that is the basis of dialectics, although dialecticians are not always aware of it. The murderer leaves a corpse and does not claim that his victim never existed; he may obscure the traces of his own identity, but he does not efface the memory and grief of those who loved his victim; he destroys a life, but he does not destroy the very fact of its ever having existed.

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The horror of the concentration and extermination camps can never be fully embraced by the imagination for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death. The inmates are more effectively cut off from the world of the living than if they were dead, because terror compels oblivion among those who know them or love them. "What extraordinary women you are here," exclaimed the Soviet police when Polish women insisted on knowing the whereabouts of their husbands who had disappeared. "In our country, when the husband is arrested, the wife sues for divorce and looks for another man" (*The Dark Side of the Moon*). Murder in the camps is as impersonal as the squashing of a gnat, a mere technique of management, as when a camp is overcrowded and is liquidated—or an accidental by-product, as when a prisoner succumbs to torture. Systematic torture and systematic starvation create an atmosphere of permanent dying, in which death as well as life is effectively obstructed.

The fear of the absolute Evil which permits of no escape knows that this is the end of dialectical evolutions and developments. It knows that modern politics revolves around a question which, strictly speaking, should never enter into politics, the question of all or nothing: of all, that is, a human society rich with infinite possibilities; or exactly nothing, that is, the end of mankind.

II

There are no parallels to the life of the concentration camps. All seeming parallels create confusion and distract attention from what is essential. Forced labor in prisons and penal colonies, banishment, slavery, all seem for a moment to offer helpful comparisons, but on closer examination lead nowhere.

Forced labor as a punishment is limited as to time and intensity. The convict retains his rights over his body; he is not absolutely tortured and he is not absolutely dominated. Banishment banishes only from one part of the world to another part of the world, also inhabited by human beings; it does not exclude from the human world altogether. Throughout history slavery has been an institution within a social order; slaves were not, like concentration camp inmates, withdrawn from the sight and hence the protection of their fellow men; as instruments of labor they had a definite price and as

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property a definite value. The concentration camp inmate has no price, because he can always be replaced and he belongs to no one. From the point of view of normal society he is absolutely superfluous, although in times of acute labor shortage, as in Russia and in Germany during the war, he is used for work.

The concentration camp as an institution was not established for the sake of any possible labor yield; the only permanent economic function of the camps has been the financing of their own supervisory apparatus; thus from the economic point of view the concentration camps exist mostly for their own sake. Any work that has been performed could have been done much better and more cheaply under different conditions.[2] The example of Russia, whose concentration camps are usually referred to as forced labor camps, because the Soviet bureaucracy has given them this flattering title, shows most clearly that the main point is not forced labor; forced labor is the normal condition of the whole Russian proletariat which has been deprived of freedom of movement and can be mobilized anywhere at any time.

The incredibility of the horrors is closely bound up with their economic uselessness. The Nazis carried this uselessness to the point of open antiutility when in the midst of the war, despite the shortage of rolling stock, they transported millions of Jews to the east and set up enormous, costly extermination factories. In the midst of a strictly utilitarian world the obvious contradiction between these acts and military expediency gave the whole enterprise an air of mad unreality.

However, such unreality, created by an apparent lack of purpose, is the very basis of all forms of concentration camp. Seen from outside, they and the things that happen in them can be described only in images drawn from a life after death, that is, a life removed from earthly purposes. Concentration camps can very aptly be divided into three types corresponding to three basic Western conceptions of a life after death: Hades, purgatory, and hell. To Hades correspond those relatively mild forms, once popular even in nontotalitarian countries, for getting undesirable elements of all sorts—refugees, stateless persons, the asocial and the unemployed—out of the way; as DP camps, which are nothing other than camps for persons who have become superfluous and bothersome, they have survived the war.

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Purgatory is represented by the Soviet Union's labor camps, where neglect is combined with chaotic forced labor. Hell in the most literal sense was embodied by those types of camp perfected by the Nazis, in which the whole of life was thoroughly and systematically organized with a view to the greatest possible torment.

All three types have one thing in common: the human masses sealed off in them are treated as if they no longer existed, as if what happened to them were no longer of any interest to anybody, as if they were already dead and some evil spirit gone mad were amusing himself by stopping them for a while between life and death before admitting them to eternal peace.

It is not so much the barbed wire as the skillfully manufactured unreality of those whom it fences in that provokes such enormous cruelties and ultimately makes extermination look like a perfectly normal measure. Everything that was done in the camps is known to us from the world of perverse, malignant fantasies. The difficult thing to understand is that, like such fantasies, these gruesome crimes took place in a phantom world, in a world in which there were neither consequences nor responsibilities; and finally neither the tormentors nor the tormented, and least of all the outsider, could be aware that what was happening was anything more than a cruel game or an absurd dream.

The films which the Allies circulated in Germany and elsewhere after the war showed clearly that this atmosphere of insanity and unreality is not dispelled by pure reportage. To the unprejudiced observer they are just about as convincing as the pictures of mysterious substances taken at spiritualist séances. Common sense reacted to the horrors of Buchenwald and Auschwitz with the plausible argument: "What crime must these people have committed that such things were done to them!"; or, in Germany and Austria, in the midst of starvation, overpopulation, and general hatred: "Too bad that they've stopped gassing the Jews"; and everywhere with the skeptical shrug that greets ineffectual propaganda.

If the propaganda of truth fails to convince the average Philistine precisely because it is too monstrous, it is positively dangerous to those who know from their own imaginings that they themselves are capable of doing such things and are therefore perfectly willing to believe in the reality of what they have seen. Suddenly it becomes

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evident that things which for thousands of years the human imagination had banished to a realm beyond human competence, can be manufactured right here on earth. Hell and purgatory, and even a shadow of their perpetual duration, can be established by the most modern methods of destruction and therapy. When people of this sort, who are far more numerous in any large city than we like to think, see these films, or read reports of the same things, the thought that comes to their minds is that the power of man is far greater than they ever dared to think and that men can realize hellish fantasies without making the sky fall or the earth open.

The one thing that cannot be reproduced is what made the traditional conceptions of hell tolerable to man: the Last Judgment, the idea of an absolute standard of justice combined with the infinite possibility of grace. For in the human estimation there is no crime and no sin commensurable with the everlasting torments of hell. Hence the discomfiture of common sense, which asks: What crime must these people have committed in order to suffer so inhumanly? Hence also the absolute innocence of the victims: no man ever deserved this. Hence finally the grotesque haphazardness with which concentration camp victims were chosen in the perfected terror state: such "punishment" can, with equal justice and injustice, be inflicted on anyone.

III

In comparison with the insane end-result—concentration camp society—the process by which men are prepared for this end, and the methods by which individuals are adapted to these conditions, are transparent and logical. The insane mass manufacture of corpses is preceded by the historically and politically intelligible preparation of living corpses.

In another connection it might be possible, indeed it would be necessary, to describe this preparatory process as a consequence of the political upheavals of our century. The impetus and, what is more important, the silent consent to such unprecedented conditions in the heart of Europe are the products of those events which in a period of political disintegration suddenly and unexpectedly made hundreds of thousands of human beings homeless, stateless, outlawed

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and unwanted, while millions of human beings were made economically superfluous and socially burdensome by unemployment. This in turn could only happen because the rights of man, which had never been philosophically established but merely formulated, which had never been politically secured but merely proclaimed, have, in their traditional form, lost all validity.

Meanwhile, however, totalitarian regimes exploited these developments for their own purposes. In order to understand these purposes, we must examine the process of preparing living corpses in its entirety. After all, loss of passport, residence, and the right to work, was only a very provisional, summary preparation, which could hardly have produced adequate results.

The first essential step was to kill the juridical person in man; this was done by placing the concentration camp outside the normal penal system, and by selecting its inmates outside the normal judicial procedure in which a definite crime entails a predictable penalty. Thus criminals, who for other reasons are an essential element in concentration camp society, are ordinarily sent to a camp only on completion of their prison sentence. Deviations from this rule in Russia must be attributed to the catastrophic shortage of prisons and to a desire, so far unrealized, to transform the whole penal system into a system of concentration camps.

The inclusion of criminals is necessary in order to make plausible the propagandistic claim that the institution exists for asocial elements. It is equally essential, as long as there is a penal system in the country, that they should be sent to the camps only on completion of their sentence, that is, when they are actually entitled to their freedom. It is, paradoxically, harder to kill the juridical person in a man who is guilty of some crime than in a totally innocent man. The stateless persons who in all European countries have lost their civil rights along with their nationality, have learned this only too well; their legal position improved automatically as soon as they committed a theft: then they were no longer without rights but had the same rights as all other thieves. In order to kill the juridical person in man, the concentration camp must under no circumstances become a calculable punishment for definite offenses. Criminals do not properly belong in the concentration camps; if nevertheless they constitute the sole permanent category among the inmates, it is a

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concession of the totalitarian state to the prejudices of society which can in this way most readily be accustomed to the existence of the camps. The amalgamation of criminals with all other categories has moreover the advantage of making it shockingly evident to all other arrivals that they have landed in the lowest level of society. It soon turns out, to be sure, that they have every reason to envy the lowest thief and murderer; but meanwhile the lowest level is a good beginning. Moreover it is an effective means of camouflage: this happens only to criminals and nothing worse is happening than what deservedly happens to criminals.[3]

The criminals everywhere constitute the aristocracy of the camps. (In Germany, during the war, they were replaced in the leadership by the Communists, because not even a minimum of rational work could be performed under the chaotic conditions created by a criminal administration. This was merely a temporary transformation of concentration camps into forced labor camps, a thoroughly atypical phenomenon of limited duration. With his limited, wartime experience of Nazi concentration camps, Rousset overestimates the influence and power of the Communists.) What places the criminals in the leadership is not so much the affinity between supervisory personnel and criminal elements—in the Soviet Union apparently the supervisors are not, like the SS, a special elite of criminals—as the fact that only criminals have been sent to the camp in connection with some definite activity and that in them consequently the destruction of the juridical person cannot be fully successful, since they at least know why they are in a concentration camp. For the politicals this is only subjectively true; their actions, in so far as they were actions and not mere opinions or someone else's vague suspicions, or accidental membership in a politically disapproved group, are as a rule not covered by the normal legal system of the country and not juridically defined.

To the amalgam of politicals and criminals, with which concentration camps in Russia and Germany started out, was added at an early date a third element which was soon to constitute the majority of all concentration camp inmates. This largest group has consisted ever since of people who had done nothing whatsoever that, either in their own consciousness or the consciousness of their tormentors, had any rational connection with their arrest. In Germany, after

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1938, this element was represented by masses of Jews, in Russia by any groups which, for any reason having nothing to do with their actions, had incurred the disfavor of the authorities. These groups, innocent in every sense, are the most suitable for thorough experimentation in disfranchisement and destruction of the juridical person, and therefore they are both qualitatively and quantitatively the most essential category of the camp population. This principle was most fully realized in the gas chambers which, if only because of their enormous capacity, could not be intended for individual cases but only for people in general. In this connection, the following dialogue sums up the situation of the individual: "For what purpose, may I ask, do the gas chambers exist?"—"For what purpose were you born?" (Rousset). It is this third group of the totally innocent who in every case fare the worst in the camps. Criminals and politicals are assimilated to this category; thus deprived of the protective distinction that comes of their having done something, they are utterly exposed to the arbitrary.

Contrasting with the complete haphazardness with which the inmates are selected are the categories, meaningless in themselves but useful from the standpoint of organization, into which they are usually divided on their arrival. In the German camps there were criminals, politicals, asocial elements, religious offenders, and Jews, all distinguished by insignia. When the French set up concentration camps after the Spanish civil war, they immediately introduced the typical totalitarian amalgam of politicals with criminals and the innocent (in this case the stateless), and despite their inexperience proved remarkably inventive in devising meaningless categories of inmates. Originally devised in order to prevent any growth of solidarity among the inmates, this technique proved particularly valuable because no one could know whether his own category was better or worse than someone else's. In Germany this eternally shifting though pedantically organized edifice was given an appearance of solidity by the fact that under any and all circumstances the Jews were the lowest category. The gruesome and grotesque part of it was that the inmates identified themselves with these categories, as though they represented a last authentic remnant of their juridical person. It is no wonder that a Communist of 1933 should have come out of the camps more Communistic than he went in, a Jew more Jewish.

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While the classification of inmates by categories is only a tactical, organizational measure, the arbitrary selection of victims indicates the essential principle of the institution. If the concentration camps had been dependent on the existence of political adversaries, they would scarcely have survived the first years of the totalitarian regimes. "The camps would have died out if in making its arrests the Gestapo had considered only the principle of opposition" (Kogon). But the existence of a political opposition is for a concentration camp system only a pretext, and the purpose of the system is not achieved even when under the most monstrous terror, the population becomes more or less voluntarily coordinated, i.e., relinquishes its political rights. The aim of an arbitrary system is to destroy the civil rights of the whole population, who ultimately become just as outlawed in their own country as the stateless and homeless. The destruction of a man's rights, the killing of the juridical person in him, is a prerequisite for dominating him entirely. For even free consent is an obstacle; and this applies not only to special categories such as criminals, political opponents, Jews, but to every inhabitant of a totalitarian state.

Any, even the most tyrannical, restriction of this arbitrary persecution to certain opinions of a religious or political nature, to certain modes of intellectual or erotic social behavior, to certain freshly invented "crimes," would render the camps superfluous, because in the long run no attitude and no opinion can withstand the threat of so much horror; and above all it would make for a new system of justice, which, given any stability at all, could not fail to produce a new juridical person in man, that would elude the totalitarian domination. The so-called *"Volksnutzen"* of the Nazis, constantly fluctuating (because what is useful today can be injurious tomorrow) and the eternally shifting party line of the Soviet Union which, being retroactive, almost daily makes new groups of people available for the concentration camps, are the only guaranty for the continued existence of the concentration camps and hence for the continued total disfranchisement of man.

IV

The next decisive step in the preparation of living corpses is the murder of the moral person in man. This is done in the main by

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making martyrdom, for the first time in history, impossible. Rousset writes:

> How many people here still believe that a protest has even historic importance? This skepticism is the real masterpiece of the SS. Their great accomplishment. They have corrupted all human solidarity. Here the night has fallen on the future. When no witnesses are left, there can be no testimony. To demonstrate when death can no longer be postponed is an attempt to give death a meaning, to act beyond one's own death. In order to be successful, a gesture must have social meaning. There are hundreds of thousands of us here, all living in absolute solitude. That is why we are subdued no matter what happens.

The camps and the murder of political adversaries are only part of organized oblivion that not only embraces carriers of public opinion such as the spoken and the written word, but extends even to the families and friends of the victim. Grief and remembrance are forbidden. In the Soviet Union a woman will sue for divorce immediately after her husband's arrest in order to save the lives of her children; if her husband chances to come back, she will indignantly turn him out of the house. The Western world has hitherto, even in its darkest periods, granted the slain enemy the right to be remembered as a self-evident acknowledgment of the fact that we are all men (and *only* men). It is only because even Achilles set out for Hector's funeral, only because the most despotic governments honored the slain enemy, only because the Romans allowed the Christians to write their martyrologies, only because the Church kept its heretics alive in the memory of men, that all was not lost and never could be lost. The concentration camps, by making death itself anonymous—in the Soviet Union it is almost impossible even to find out whether a prisoner is dead or alive—robbed death of the meaning which it had always been possible for it to have. In a sense they took away the individual's own death, proving that henceforth nothing belonged to him and he belonged to no one. His death merely set a seal on the fact that he had never really existed.

This attack on the moral person might still have been opposed by man's conscience which tells him that it is better to die a victim than to live as a bureaucrat of murder. The totalitarian governments have cut the moral person off from this individualist escape by making the decisions of conscience absolutely questionable and equivocal.

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When a man is faced with the alternative of betraying and thus murdering his friends or of sending his wife and children, for whom he is in every sense responsible, to their death; when even suicide would mean the immediate murder of his own family—how is he to decide? The alternative is no longer between good and evil, but between murder and murder. In perhaps the only article which really gets to the core of this matter, Camus (in *Twice a Year,* 1947) tells of a woman in Greece, who was allowed by the Nazis to choose which among her three children should be killed.

Through the creation of conditions under which conscience ceases to be adequate and to do good becomes utterly impossible, the consciously organized complicity of all men in the crimes of totalitarian regimes is extended to the victims and thus made really total. The SS implicated concentration camp inmates—criminals, politicals, Jews—in their crimes by making them responsible for a large part of the administration, thus confronting them with the hopeless dilemma whether to send their friends to their death, or to help murder other men who happened to be strangers.

Once the moral person has been killed, the one thing that still prevents men from being made into living corpses is the differentiation of the individual, his unique identity. In a sterile form such individuality can be preserved through a persistent stoicism, and it is certain that many men under totalitarian rule have taken and are each day still taking refuge in this absolute isolation of a personality without rights or conscience. There is no doubt that this part of the human person, precisely because it depends so essentially on nature and on forces that cannot be controlled by the will, is the hardest to destroy (and when destroyed is most easily repaired).

The methods of dealing with this uniqueness of the human person are numerous and we shall not attempt to list them all. They begin with the monstrous conditions in the transports to the camps, when hundreds of human beings are packed into a cattle car stark naked, glued to each other, and shunted back and forth over the countryside for days on end; they continue upon arrival at the camp, the well-organized shock of the first hours, the shaving of the head, the grotesque camp clothing; and they end in the utterly unimaginable tortures so gauged as not to kill the body, at any

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event not quickly. The aim of all these methods, in any case, is to manipulate the human body—with its infinite possibilities of suffering—in such a way as to make it destroy the human person as inexorably as certain mental diseases of organic origin.

It is here that the utter lunacy of the entire process becomes most apparent. Torture, to be sure, is an essential feature of the whole totalitarian police and judiciary apparatus; it is used every day to make people talk. This type of torture, since it pursues a definite, rational aim, has certain limitations: either the prisoner talks within a certain time, or he is killed. But to this rationally conducted torture another, irrational, sadistic type was added in the first Nazi concentration camps and in the cellars of the Gestapo. Carried on for the most part by the SA, it pursued no aims and was not systematic, but depended on the initiative of largely abnormal elements. The mortality was so high that only a few concentration camp inmates of 1933 survived these first years. This type of torture seemed to be not so much a calculated political institution as a concession of the regime to its criminal and abnormal elements, who were thus rewarded for services rendered. Behind the blind bestiality of the SA, there often lay a deep hatred and resentment against all those who were socially, intellectually, or physically better off than themselves, and who now, as if in fulfillment of their wildest dreams, were in their power. This resentment, which never died out entirely in the camps, strikes us as a last remnant of humanly understandable feeling.

The real horror began, however, when the SS took over the administration of the camps. The old spontaneous bestiality gave way to an absolutely cold and systematic destruction of human bodies, calculated to destroy human dignity; death was avoided or postponed indefinitely. The camps were no longer amusement parks for beasts in human form, that is, for men who really belonged in mental institutions and prisons; the reverse became true: they were turned into "drill grounds" (Kogon), on which perfectly normal men were trained to be full-fledged members of the SS.

The killing of man's individuality, of the uniqueness shaped in equal parts by nature, will, and destiny, which has become so self-evident a premise for all human relations that even identical twins inspire a certain uneasiness, creates a horror that vastly overshadows the outrage of the juridical-political person and the despair of the

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moral person. It is this horror that gives rise to the nihilistic generalizations which maintain plausibly enough that essentially all men alike are beasts. Actually the experience of the concentration camps does show that human beings can be transformed into specimens of the human beast, and that man's "nature" is only "human" in so far as it opens up to man the possibility of becoming something highly unnatural, that is, a man.

After murder of the moral person and annihilation of the juridical person, the destruction of the individuality is almost always successful. Conceivably some laws of mass psychology may be found to explain why millions of human beings allowed themselves to be marched unresistingly into the gas chambers, although these laws would explain nothing else but the destruction of individuality. It is more significant that those individually condemned to death very seldom attempted to take one of their executioners with them, that there were scarcely any serious revolts, and that even in the moment of liberation there were very few spontaneous massacres of the SS men. For to destroy individuality is to destroy spontaneity, man's power to begin something new out of his own resources, something new that cannot be explained on the basis of reactions to environment and events. Nothing then remains but ghastly marionettes with human faces, which all behave like the dog in Pavlov's experiments, which all react with perfect reliability even when going to their own death, and which do nothing but react. This is the real triumph of the system—:

> The triumph of the SS demands that the tortured victim allow himself to be led to the noose without protesting, that he renounce and abandon himself to the point of ceasing to affirm his identity. And it is not for nothing. It is not gratuitously, out of sheer sadism, that the SS men desire this defeat. They know that the system which succeeds in destroying its victim before he mounts the scaffold . . . is incomparably the best for keeping a whole people in slavery. In submission. Nothing is more terrible than these processions of human beings going like dummies to their death. The man who sees this says to himself: "For them to be thus reduced, what power must be concealed in the hands of the masters," and he turns away, full of bitterness but defeated. (Rousset).

V

It is characteristic of totalitarian terror that it increases as the

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regime becomes more secured, and accordingly concentration camps are expanded as political opposition decreases.[4] Totalitarian demands do not seem to be satisfied by political success in establishing a one-party state, and it seems as though political opposition were by no means the cause of terror but rather a barrier to its full development. This seems absurd only if we apply to modern totalitarian movements those standards of utility which they themselves expressly reject as obsolete, sentimental, and bourgeois.

If on the contrary we take totalitarian aspirations seriously and refuse to be misled by the common-sense assertion that they are utopian and unrealizable, it develops that the society of the dying established in the camps is the only form of society in which it is possible to dominate man entirely. Those who aspire to total domination must liquidate all spontaneity, such as the mere existence of individuality will always engender, and track it down in its most private forms, regardless of how unpolitical and harmless these may seem. Pavlov's dog, the human specimen reduced to the most elementary reactions, the bundle of reactions that can always be liquidated and replaced by other bundles of reactions that behave in exactly the same way, is the model "citizen" of a totalitarian state; and such a citizen can be produced only imperfectly outside of the camps.

The uselessness of the camps, their cynically admitted antiutility, is only apparent. In reality they are more essential to the preservation of the regime's power than any of its other institutions. Without concentration camps, without the undefined fear they inspire and the very well-defined training they offer in totalitarian domination, which has nowhere else been fully tested with all of its most radical possibilities, a totalitarian state can neither inspire its nuclear troops with fanaticism nor maintain a whole people in complete apathy. The dominating and the dominated would only too quickly sink back into the "old bourgeois routine"; after early "excesses," they would succumb to everyday life with its human laws; in short, they would develop in the direction which all observers counseled by common sense were so prone to predict. The tragic fallacy of all these prophecies originating in a world that was still safe, was to suppose that there was such a thing as one human nature established for all time, to identify this human nature with history and thus declare that the

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idea of total domination was not only inhuman but also unrealistic. Meanwhile we have learned that the power of man is so great that he really can be what he wishes to be.

It is in the very nature of totalitarian regimes to demand unlimited power. Such power can only be secured if literally all men, without a single exception, are reliably dominated in every aspect of their life. In the realm of foreign affairs new neutral territories must constantly be subjugated, while at home ever-new human groups must be mastered in expanding concentration camps, or, when circumstances require, liquidated to make room for others. Here the question of opposition is unimportant both in foreign and domestic affairs. Any neutrality, indeed any spontaneously given friendship is from the standpoint of totalitarian domination just as dangerous as open hostility, precisely because spontaneity as such, with its incalculability, is the greatest of all obstacles to total domination over man. The Communists of non-Communist countries, who fled or were called to Moscow, learned by bitter experience that they constituted a menace to the Soviet Union. Convinced Communists are in this sense, which alone has any reality today, just as ridiculous and just as menacing to the regime in Russia as for example the convinced Nazis of the Roehm faction were to the Nazis.

What makes conviction and opinion of any sort so ridiculous and dangerous under totalitarian conditions is that totalitarian regimes take the greatest pride in having no need of them, or of any human help of any kind. Men insofar as they are more than animal reaction and fulfillment of functions are entirely superfluous to totalitarian regimes. Totalitarianism strives not toward despotic rule over men, but toward a system in which men are superfluous. Total power can be achieved and safeguarded only in a world of conditioned reflexes, of marionettes without the slightest trace of spontaneity. Precisely because man's resources are so great, he can be fully dominated only when he becomes a specimen of the animal-species man.

Therefore character is a threat and even the most unjust legal rules are an obstacle; but individuality, anything indeed that distinguishes one man from another, is intolerable. As long as all men have not been made equally superfluous—and this has been accomplished only in concentration camps—the ideal of totalitarian domination has not been achieved. Totalitarian states strive constantly,

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though never with complete success, to establish the superfluity of man—by the arbitrary selection of various groups for concentration camps, by constant purges of the ruling apparatus, by mass liquidations. Common sense protests desperately that the masses are submissive and that all this gigantic apparatus of terror is therefore superfluous; if they were capable of telling the truth, the totalitarian rulers would reply: The apparatus seems superfluous to you only because it serves to make men superfluous.

They will not speak so frankly. But the concentration camps, and even more so the corpse factories invented by the Nazis speak only too clearly. Today, with population almost everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously being rendered superfluous by political, social, and economic events. At such a time the instruments devised for making human beings superfluous are bound to offer a great temptation: why not use these same instruments to liquidate human beings who have already become superfluous?

This side of the matter is only too well understood by the common sense of the mob which in most countries is too desperate to retain much fear of death. The Nazis, who were well aware that their defeat would not solve the problems of Europe, knew exactly what they were doing when, toward the end of the war—which by then they knew they had lost—they set up those factories of annihilation which demonstrated the swiftest possible solution to the problem of superfluous human masses. There is no doubt that this solution will from now on occur to millions of people whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, or social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man.

1. That Rousset's purely literary vitalism could survive the years in Buchenwald would seem to be striking proof of Kogon's thesis that "most of the prisoners [left] the concentration camps with exactly the same convictions that they had before; if anything, these convictions became more accentuated" (p. 302). David Rousset concludes 702 pages of horror, which prove many times over that it is possible to kill man's humanity without killing his body, with a short paragraph of "triumph," that sounds as if it had been written by a literary hack who had never set foot outside of Paris. "We never blasphemed against life. Our systems of the world were not alike, but more profoundly, more remotely, our affirmation of the power and creative grandeur of life, our

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absolute faith in its triumph remained intact. We never believed in the final disaster of humanity. For collectively it is the highest, strongest expression of the vital gesture in the history of the universe." It is not surprising that this "vital gesture" should have appealed to Georges Bataille with his theory of "extreme experience"—yet it is somehow surprising that the proponents of extremity and meaninglessness should not have changed their mind in the face of a reality that surpassed all their dreams. Bataille (*Critique,* October 1947) writes: "One of Rousset's most unexpected reactions is his exultation, almost to the point of euphoria, before the idea of participating in an experience that made no sense. Nothing could be more virile, more *healthy.*" The translation is quoted from *Instead* (No. 1, 1948); it would seem to be no accident that this pseudo-profound reflection was the first break in the silence that the intellectuals have maintained on this whole matter.

2. Kogon has the following to say of working conditions in the Nazi camps, which presumably were better organized from this point of view than those of the Soviet Union: "A large part of the work exacted in the concentration camps was useless; either it was superfluous or it was so miserably planned that it had to be done over two or three times. Buildings often had to be begun several times because the foundations kept caving in" (p. 58). As for Russian conditions, even Dallin (*Forced Labor in Soviet Russia,* p. 105) who has built his whole book on the thesis that the purpose of the Russian camps was to provide cheap labor, is forced to admit: "Actually, the efficiency of forced labor, despite incentives and compulsion, was and is on an extremely low level. The average efficiency of a slave laborer has certainly been below 50 per cent of that of a free Russian worker, whose productivity in turn has never been high."

3. "Gestapo and SS have always attached great importance to mixing the categories of inmates in the camps. In no camp have the inmates belonged exclusively to one category" (Kogon, p. 19). In Russia it has also been customary from the first to mix political prisoners and criminals. During the first ten years of Soviet power, the leftist political groups enjoyed certain privileges as compared with counter-revolutionaries and criminals. But "after the end of the twenties, the politicals were even officially treated as inferior to the common criminals" (Dallin, 177 ff).

4. This is evident in Russia as well as in Germany. In Russia, the concentration camps, which were originally intended for enemies of the regime, began to swell enormously after 1930, i.e., at a time when not only all armed resistance had been quelled, but when all opposition to Stalin within the Party had been liquidated. In the first years there were in Germany at most ten camps with a total of no more than ten thousand inmates. All effective resistance against the Nazis ceased by the end of 1936. But at the outbreak of the war there were more than a hundred concentration camps, which after 1940 seem to have maintained an average population of one million.

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Jean Cocteau

THE HUMAN VOICE: A ONE-ACT PLAY

Hello, hello, hello . . . . No, Madame, this is a party line; ring off . . . . Hello . . . . I'm a subscriber, I'm on the line . . . . Oh! . . . . hello! . . . . No, ring off yourself, Madame . . . . Hello, operator, hello . . . Let us . . . . No, this isn't Dr. Schmit's . . . . 0-8, not 0-7 . . . . hello! . . . . this is absurd . . . . They keep ringing me; oh, well. (*She hangs up, her hand on the receiver. Telephone rings.*) . . . . Hello! . . . . But, Madame, what do you expect me to do? . . . . You're very unpleasant . . . . What do you mean, my fault? . . . . Not at all . . . . Not at all . . . . Hello! . . . . Hello, operator . . . . They keep ringing me, and I can't get a word in. There're so many people on the line. Tell that lady to ring off. (*She hangs up. Telephone rings.*) Hello! it's you? . . . . is it you? . . . . Yes . . . . I can hardly hear you . . . . you sound far away, far far away . . . . Hello! . . . . this is awful! . . . . there are so many people on the line . . . . Call me back. Hello! *Call me back!* . . . . I said: Call me back . . . . Madame, please ring off. I keep telling you, I'm not Dr. Schmit . . . . Hello! . . . . (*She hangs up. Telephone rings.*)

Ah! At last! . . . . it's you . . . . yes . . . . quite clearly . . . . hello! . . . . yes . . . . It was dreadful, trying to hear you, with all those people . . . . yes . . . . yes . . . . no . . . . just luck . . . . I just got back ten minutes ago . . . . You hadn't called, had you? . . . . oh! . . . . no, no . . . . I was out for dinner . . . . at Martha's . . . . It must be quarter past eleven . . . . Are you at your house? . . . . Well, look at the electric clock . . . . I thought so . . . . Yes, darling, yes . . . . Last night? Why, last night I went right to bed, and I couldn't sleep, and so I took a pill . . . . no . . . . only one . . . . at nine o'clock . . . . I had a sort of headache, but I got rid of it. Martha came. We had breakfast together. I did some errands. I came back here. I've put all the letters in the yellow bag. I've . . . .

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What? . . . . I'm all right . . . . Of course I am . . . . Courage? Why, I've got all the courage in the world . . . . After that? Well, after that I got dressed, and Martha came for me, and there you are . . . . I've just got back from her house . . . . She's been wonderful . . . . Absolutely wonderful, perfect . . . . Yes, she gives you that impression, but she really isn't . . . . You were right; you always are . . . . My rose gown, with the fur . . . . My black hat . . . . Yes, I've still got it on . . . . no, no, I'm not smoking. I've only smoked three cigarettes . . . . Yes, of course . . . . Yes, yes . . . . how good you are! . . . . And you, you just got home? . . . . Oh, you've been at home all along . . . . What lawsuit? . . . . Oh yes . . . . but you mustn't wear yourself out . . . . Hello! hello! don't cut us off. Hello . . . . Hello, darling . . . . hello! . . . . If they cut us off, call me back right away . . . . of course . . . . Hello! No . . . . here I am . . . . The bag? . . . . Your letters and mine . . . . You can have it picked up whenever you want . . . . A little hard . . . . I understand . . . . Oh darling, don't apologize, it's the most natural thing in the world, and I'm the one that's being stupid . . . . You're so nice . . . . you're so nice . . . . Neither did I; I didn't think I had it in me . . . . Admire me? Why should you? I manage to get around, like a sleepwalker. I get dressed, I go out, I come home, like a machine. Tomorrow, maybe I'll not be so brave . . . . You? . . . . No, no . . . . No, but darling, I haven't the slightest thing to hold against you . . . . I . . . . I . . . . let me . . .. What? . . . . Perfectly all right . . . . Not at all . . . . We've . . . . We've always agreed to be frank with each other, and I think it would have been criminal of you to leave me without knowing anything up till the last minute. That would have been too brutal; but as it is, I've had time to get used to it, to understand . . . . What do you mean, an "act"? . . . . Hello! . . . . Who? . . . . you think I'm making an "act" out of it, me? . . . . You know me, you know I couldn't make myself . . . . Not at all . . . . Not at all . . . . Perfectly calm . . . . You'll see . . . . I said: You'll see. Does my voice sound as if I were hiding something? . . . . No . . . . I've made up my mind to be brave, and I will . . . . Please . . . . it wasn't the same thing . . . . maybe, no use worrying, looking for trouble, and then missing it . . . . Don't exaggerate . . . . I have all the same had time to get used to it! . . . . You used to

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cuddle me, lull me to sleep . . . . Our love had so many things to fight against. We had to resist, to give up five years of joy, or take the risks. I've never believed that life would iron itself out. I'm paying dearly for a priceless joy . . . . Hello . . . . *priceless,* and I don't regret . . . . I . . . . I don't regret anything, anything, anything! . . . . You . . . . you're wrong . . . . you're . . . . you're . . . . you're wrong. I've . . . . Hello! . . . . I've got just what I deserved. I was the one who decided to lose my head, for complete happiness . . . . dearest . . . . listen . . . . Hello! . . . . darling . . . . let me . . . . hello . . . . let me talk. Don't blame yourself. It's all my fault. Yes it is, it is . . . . Do you remember that Sunday at Versailles, and the telegram? . . . . Oh! . . . . Well, then! . . . . *I* was the one who wanted to come, *I* was the one who shut you up, *I* was the one who told you it was all the same to me . . . . No . . . . no . . . . no . . . . now you *are* being unfair . . . . I . . . . I telephoned first . . . . no, Tuesday . . . . a Tuesday . . . . I'm sure of it. Tuesday the 27th. Your wire came Monday evening, the 26th. You ought to realize that I know those dates by heart . . . . your mother? Why . . . . It's not really any trouble . . . . I don't know yet . . . . Yes . . . . maybe . . . . Oh, no! surely not right away; and you? . . . . Tomorrow! . . . . I had no idea that it was so soon . . . . Well, listen . . . . it's perfectly simple . . . . the doorman will have that bag tomorrow morning. All Joseph will have to do is stop by for it . . . . Me? Oh, I don't know, I may stay here, or I may spend a few days in the country, out at Martha's . . . . Yes, he's here. He's like a lost soul. Yesterday he spent the whole day between the vestibule and the bedroom. Watching me. Pricking up his ears. Listening. He was looking for you everywhere. He seemed to be blaming me for sitting there and not getting up to help him find you . . . . I think it would be best for you to take him . . . . The poor animal must be so miserable . . . . Oh, me? . . . . He isn't a woman's dog. I wouldn't look after him right. I wouldn't take him out. It would be much better for him to stay with you . . . . He'd forget me in no time . . . . Let's wait and see . . . . let's wait and see . . . . No, it isn't complicated at all. All you'd have to say is that it's some friend's dog. He likes Joseph. Joseph could come and get him . . . . I'll put on his red collar, it hasn't any name-tag . . . . Let's wait and see . . . . yes . . . . yes . . . .

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yes, darling . . . . of course . . . . why yes, darling . . . . What gloves? . . . . You mean your fur-lined ones, the gloves you used for driving? . . . . I don't know. I haven't seen them. Maybe. I'll go and look . . . . Hold the wire. Don't let them cut you off.

(From behind the table lamp she picks up a pair of fur-lined gloves with wristlets and kisses them passionately. She speaks with the gloves held against her cheek.)

Hello . . . . hello . . . . no . . . . I looked everywhere, the bureau, the armchair, the dressing room; they just aren't here . . . . Listen . . . . I'll look again, but I'm absolutely certain . . . . If they should turn up tomorrow morning I'll have them sent downstairs with the bag . . . . Darling? . . . . The letters . . . . yes . . . . you'll burn them . . . . I'm going to ask you the silliest thing . . . . No, look, I mean if you burn them I wish you'd keep the ashes in that little tortoise-shell cigarette box I gave you, and . . . . Hello! . . . . no . . . . I am a fool . . . . forgive me. I was being so clever. *(She is crying.)* . . . . There, that's over. I'll blow my nose. Just the same, I'd be very glad to have those ashes; that's all . . . . How nice of you . . . . Ah!

(The passage in quotation marks is to be spoken by the actress in the foreign language with which she is most familiar.)

"As for your sister's papers, I have burned everything in the kitchen stove. At first I thought of opening them in order to take out that design you spoke to me about, but since you had told me to burn everything, I burned everything . . . . Ah, good . . . . good . . . . yes" . . . . *(original language:)* That's right, you're in your dressing gown . . . . Are you going to bed? . . . . You ought not to work so hard, you ought to go to bed now if you're getting up so early tomorrow morning. Hello! . . . . Hello! . . . . is this better? . . . . But I *am* talking loud . . . . There, now can you hear me? . . . . I said, Can you hear me now? . . . . that's funny, because I can hear you as plainly as though you were here in the room . . . . Hello! . . . . hello, hello! . . . . Well, for heaven's sake, now *I'm* the one that can't hear *you* . . . . Yes, but far away, far away . . . . And you can hear me. Well, we each get a turn . . . . No, don't ring off! . . . . Hello! . . . . I'm still talking, operator, I'm still talking! . . . . Ah, now I can hear you! I can hear you so clearly.

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Yes, it was horrid. Like being dead. You can hear, but you can't make yourself heard . . . . No, very very clearly. It's unheard-of that they'd let us talk so long. Usually they cut you off after three minutes and then give you back a wrong number . . . . Yes, but I do . . . . I can hear even better than I could a minute ago, but your phone has a buzz. It doesn't sound like your phone at all . . . . I can see you, you know. (*He makes her guess.*) . . . . Which scarf? . . . . The red one . . . . ah! . . . . on my left side . . . . You have your sleeves rolled up . . . . in your left hand? the receiver. Your right hand? your fountain pen. You're drawing profiles and hearts and stars on the blotting pad. And you're smiling! I have eyes for ears . . . . (*With a mechanical gesture as though to hide her face.*) . . . . Oh no, darling, above all don't look at me . . . . Afraid? . . . . No, I won't be afraid . . . . that's even worse . . . . After all, I've got out of the habit of sleeping alone . . . . Yes . . . . yes . . . . yes . . . . yes, yes . . . . I promise . . . . I, I . . . . I promise . . . . I promise . . . . you're so good to me . . . . I don't know. I try not to look at myself. I'm afraid to turn on the dressing-room light any more. Yesterday I found myself face to face with an old woman . . . . No, no, a thin old woman with white hair and a whole crowd of little wrinkles . . . . That's nice of you! but, my dear, a face of distinction—that's the worst kind of all, that's for acting . . . . I used to like it better when you said, "Just look at this funny little puss!" . . . . Yes, my dear Sir! . . . . I was joking . . . . You're being silly . . . . "Luckily," yes, because you're being awkward and because you love me. If you didn't love me, if you weren't being awkward, a telephone would be a dreadful weapon. A weapon that leaves no marks, a noiseless weapon . . . . Naughty, I? . . . . Hello! . . . . Hello, hello! . . . . hello, darling . . . . where are you? . . . . Hello, hello, hello, operator. (*She signals.*) Hello, operator, we were cut off. (*She hangs up. Silence. She takes off the receiver.*) Hello! (*She signals.*) Hello, hello! (*She signals.*) Hello, operator. (*She signals. Bell rings.*) Hello, is that you? . . . . No, operator. Someone cut me off . . . . I don't know . . . . I mean . . . . yes . . . . wait a minute . . . . Auteuil 04-7. Hello! . . . . Busy? . . . . Hello, operator, he's trying to call me back . . . . All right. (*She hangs up. Bell rings.*) Hello! hello! 04-7? Not, not 6; 7. Oh! (*She signals.*) Hello . . . . Hello, operator. That was the wrong number. You gave me ring 6.

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I want ring 7. 04-7, Auteuil. (*She waits.*) Hello! Auteuil 04-7? Ah, yes! Is that you, Joseph? . . . . This is Madame . . . . Monsieur and I got cut off . . . . He's not there? . . . . yes . . . . yes . . . . not coming back this evening . . . . of course, how stupid of me! He called me from some restaurant, and we got cut off, and I called him back at his number . . . . Excuse me, Joseph . . . . Thanks . . . . Thanks so much . . . . Good night, Joseph . . . . (*She rings off on the verge of fainting. Bell rings.*)

Hello! Oh darling, darling! It's you? . . . . They cut us off . . . . No, no. I was waiting. Somebody rang, and I answered, but there was no one on the line . . . . I suppose so . . . . Of course . . . . You're sleepy . . . . It was good of you to telephone . . . . so good . . . . (*She is crying.*) . . . . (*Silence.*) . . . . No, I'm here . . . . What? . . . . Forgive me . . . . It's too silly . . . . Nothing, nothing . . . . Nothing's wrong with me . . . . I swear nothing's wrong . . . . It's just the same . . . . Nothing at all. You're mistaken . . . . The same as just a little while ago . . . . Only, you know, there's all this talking, talking, and you never think that you'll have to stop, ring off, fall back into the emptiness, the dark . . . . well . . . . (*She is crying.*) . . . . Listen, my dear love. I've never lied to you . . . . Yes, I know, I know, I believe you, I'm sure of it . . . . no, it isn't that . . . . it's because I just *did* lie to you . . . . just now . . . . here . . . . on the telephone, fifteen minutes ago, I lied to you. I know my luck has run out, but lying doesn't bring luck, and anyhow I don't like to lie to you, I can't, I don't want to lie to you even when it's for your own happiness . . . . Oh, nothing so serious, darling, don't be frightened . . . . Only, I was lying when I told you about my gown and how I had dinner at Martha's . . . . I haven't had dinner at all, and I'm not wearing my rose gown. I'm wearing a cape over my slip, because what with waiting for your call, and staring at the phone, and sitting down, and standing up again, and walking back and forth, I was going crazy, simply crazy! So I put on my cape, and I was going to go out and take a taxi and have him drive back and forth in front of your house, to wait for . . . . Oh dear, to wait for, for—I don't know what! . . . . Yes, you're right . . . . Yes . . . . Yes, I can hear you . . . . I'll be good . . . . I can hear you . . . . I'll take care of everything, really I will . . . . Here . . . . I haven't eaten anything . . . . I couldn't . . . . I've been so

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sick . . . . Last night I thought I'd take a tablet so I could get to sleep; I thought if I took more I'd sleep better, and if I took them all I'd sleep, and no dreams, and never wake up again, I'd be dead . . . . (*She is crying.*) . . . . I swallowed twelve of them . . . . in hot water . . . . Like a log. And I *did* have a dream. I dreamed that everything was the way it is. I woke up with a start, so happy because it *was* a dream; and when I found out that it was true, that I was alone, that my head wasn't resting on your shoulder and my legs weren't between your legs, I felt that I couldn't, that I *simply couldn't* go on living . . . . light; light and cold, and I couldn't feel my heart beating and death was long in coming and since I was in awful pain, finally I called up Martha. I didn't have courage to die alone . . . . Darling . . . . Darling . . . . It was four o'clock in the morning. She came with that doctor who lives in her house. My temperature was 'way above a hundred. It seems it's very hard to poison yourself, you always get the dose wrong. The doctor made out a prescription and Martha stayed here with me until this evening. I begged her to go away because you had said that you'd phone for the last time, and I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to talk . . . . Very well, yes . . . . No more . . . . Yes, that's the truth . . . . A little fever . . . . 100.3 . . . . comes from nerves . . . . don't worry about me . . . . What a mess I make of things! Here I'd sworn not to upset you, to let you go without any fuss, to say goodbye as if we were going to see each other tomorrow . . . . I'm a fool . . . . yes, yes, a fool! . . . . . What's hard is to ring off, to bring on the dark . . . . (*She is crying.*) . . . . Hello! I thought we'd been cut off . . . . You're so good, darling . . . . My poor darling, and I've hurt you so . . . . Yes, speak, speak, say anything at all . . . . I was suffering so much I could have rolled on the ground but when you speak that's enough and I feel all right, and close my eyes. You know, sometimes when we were in bed and I'd have my ear there against your chest, and you were talking, I could hear your voice exactly the way it sounds tonight on the phone . . . . Coward? . . . . I'm the one that's a coward. I'd promised myself . . . . I . . . . Good heavens! You? who . . . . you . . . . you, who've never given me anything but happiness . . . . But, darling, I keep telling you, that isn't it at all. You see, I knew—I *knew*—and I was simply waiting for what has happened. After all there are so many women who

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imagine they're living happily with the man they love and who learn about the break with no preparation—I *knew*— . . . . Why, I never told you, but, heavens, it was right at the dressmaker's, in a magazine: I saw her photo . . . . On the table, wide open at the right page . . . . It's human, or anyway feminine . . . . Because I didn't want to make a mess of our last weeks together . . . . no. Perfectly natural . . . . Don't make me out better than I am . . . . Hello! . . . . I can hear music . . . . I said, I can hear music . . . . Well, you ought to rap on the wall and stop those neighbors from playing their machine so late at night. They've fallen into bad habits because you haven't been living at home . . . . What's the use? Anyhow, Martha's doctor is coming back tomorrow . . . . No, darling, no. He's a very good doctor and I see no reason for hurting his feelings by calling in another one . . . . Don't worry about me . . . . Why, yes . . . . why, yes . . . . She'll give you any news . . . . I understand . . . . I understand . . . . Anyway, this time I'm being brave, very brave . . . . What? . . . . Oh yes, a thousand times better. If you hadn't called me, I'd have died . . . . No . . . . wait . . . . wait . . . . Let's find some way . . . . (*She is pacing back and forth, moaning in agony.*) . . . . Forgive me. I know that this is an intolerable scene and that you're being so patient, but believe me, I'm suffering, suffering so much. This telephone cord is the last thing that connects me with us . . . . The night before last? I slept. I had gone to bed with the telephone . . . . No, no. In my bed . . . . Yes, I know. I'm very silly, but I had the telephone in my bed because, after all, the telephone connects us. It goes to your house and since I had your promise to call me. Well, you can imagine all the silly dreams I had. That phone-call turned into a real blow: you hit me and I fell down. Or it was a neck, a neck you strangle,* or I was at the bottom of an ocean that looked like the Auteuil apartment, and I was attached to you by a diver's air tube and I was begging you not to cut it—silly dreams when they're told, but real enough in sleep, and terrible . . . . Because you are talking to me. Here are five years that I've lived because of you, that you've been the only air I could breathe, that I've spent my time waiting for you; imagining that you were dead if you

* The puns in this passage defy translation. The play is upon *coup* (phone-call), *coup* (a physical blow) and *cou* (neck). The original: Ce coup de téléphone devenait un vrai coup que tu me donnais et je tombais, ou bien un cou, un cou qu'on étrangle. . . . [D.F.]

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were late, dying of imagining you dead, coming to life again when you came home and were really here, dying for fear that you'd leave. And now I can breathe because you are talking to me. My dream wasn't so silly, after all. If you cut us off, you're cutting the air tube . . . . Of course, my dear; I slept. I slept because it was the first time. The doctor said so: it's an intoxication. The first night, you sleep. And then the pain distracts you, it's all new, you can bear it. What you can't bear is the second night, yesterday, or the third, tonight in a few minutes, and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and all those days and days of doing *what,* dear God? . . . . I have no fever, not the slightest fever; I can see clearly . . . . It's just because there *is* no way out that it would have been better for me to be brave and tell you lies . . . . And . . . . and supposing I can go to sleep: after sleeping there are dreams and waking up and eating and getting out of bed and bathing and leaving the house and going—where? . . . . But my poor darling, all I've ever had to take up my time is you . . . . Forgive me! I was always busy, of course. Busy with you, for you . . . . Martha has arranged her life . . . . It's as if you were to ask a fish how he planned to arrange his life without water . . . . I keep telling you, I don't need anybody . . . . Amusements! I'll tell you something that isn't very poetic, but it's true: since that famous Sunday night I've been amused exactly once, and that was at the dentist's when he hit a nerve . . . . Alone . . . . Alone . . . . Two days now that he hasn't left the hall . . . . I've tried to call him, pet him. He won't let anyone touch him. A little more, and he'd bite me . . . . Yes, me, me! He turns back his lips and snarls. He's a different dog, I tell you. He scares me . . . . At Martha's? I've told you that he won't let anyone get near him. Martha had a terrible time leaving. He didn't want to let her open the door . . . . It's even safer. I swear that he frightens me. He doesn't eat any more. He doesn't move. And when he looks at me I get goose flesh . . . . How should I know? Maybe he thinks that I've harmed you . . . . Poor dog! . . . . I have no reason to dislike him. I know it only too well. He loves you. You don't come home. He thinks it's my fault . . . . Try to send Joseph . . . . I think he'd go with Joseph . . . . Oh, me? . . . . Well, more or less . . . . He didn't "adore" me at all! How do I know? . . . . Well, maybe he seemed to, but I give you my word that it wouldn't be a good idea for me to touch him now . . . . If you won't

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take him back I'll have to have him sent somewhere. There's no point in having this dog get sick and become vicious . . . . He won't bite anyone if he's with you. He'll love the people you love . . . . Well, what I meant was: he'll love the people you live with . . . . Yes, dear, of course. But he's a dog. In spite of his intelligence you can't expect him to guess . . . . I was always perfectly natural with him. Heaven knows what he's seen . . . . I mean, perhaps he doesn't recognize me, perhaps I've frightened him somehow . . . . You never can tell . . . . Not at all . . . . Look, Aunt Jeanne, the night when I told her that her son had been killed. She is very pale and very small.—Well, she became all red and gigantic . . . . A red giant; she bumped the ceiling with her head and she was all covered with hands, and she filled the room with her shadow, and she was terrifying . . . . *she was terrifying* . . . . Please forgive me. Simply her dog. Hiding under the bureau, barking as though it were after some animal . . . . But I don't know, darling! How do you expect me to know? I'm not myself. I must have done some dreadful things. Just think, I tore up that package of photographs, and the envelope, with one rip; and I never even noticed it. That would be something, even for a man. . . . The license ones . . . . What? . . . . No, because I don't need any papers now . . . . No loss at all. I was frightful . . . . Never! It was my luck to meet you on a trip. Now, if I took a trip, I might have the bad luck to meet you again . . . . Don't insist . . . . Let me . . . . Hello, hello, Madame, ring off. We're talking. Hello! Certainly not, Madame . . . . But, my dear Madame, we are not trying to be interesting. All you have to do is not to stay on the line . . . . If you think we're silly, why are you wasting your time instead of hanging up? . . . . Oh! . . . . Dearest, dearest, don't be angry! . . . . At last! . . . . no, no. That was me, that time. I jiggled the hook. She's hung up. She hung up just after she said that horrid thing . . . . Hello! . . . . You seem put out . . . . Yes, you're put out because of what you just heard, I can tell from your voice . . . . You're upset! . . . . I . . . . but darling, she must be a very sick woman, and she doesn't know you. She thinks you're like other men . . . . No, no, darling! It isn't the same thing at all! . . . . Sorry? for what? . . . . Hello! . . . . stop, stop, don't think of that silliness. It's all over . . . . You're so sensitive! . . . . Who? It doesn't matter who . . . . The day before yesterday I met that person whose

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last name begins with S . . . . B. S.—yes, Henri Martin . . . . She asked me if you had a brother and if it was he whose marriage had just been announced . . . . How did I feel? What do you think! . . . . Oh, the truth . . . . Condolences; you know . . . . Well, I can tell you that I didn't go on about it. I said that there were people waiting for me at home . . . . Don't look for things that aren't there. It's all perfectly simple. People hate to be fooled, and little by little I've managed to fool everybody . . . . I didn't want to lose a minute of us . . . . Makes absolutely no difference. Let them say what they like . . . . We've got to be fair. People don't understand our kind of arrangement . . . . People don't . . . . Where people are concerned, you either love or you hate. Separations are separations. They see, right away. You'll never make them understand . . . . You'll . . . . you'll never make them understand certain things . . . . The best thing to do is to be like me and laugh at them . . . . Absolutely (*A stifled groan.*) Oh! . . . . Nothing. I'm talking to you, I'm talking; it's just like always, and suddenly the truth hits me . . . . (*Tears*) . . . . Why do we try to pretend? . . . . Yes . . . . yes . . . . No! Then, we were seeing each other. We could lose our heads, forget promises, take impossible chances, make sure of our love in bed, embracing. A look could change everything. But with this machine, what's done is done . . . . Don't worry. People don't kill themselves twice . . . . Maybe, to get to sleep . . . . I wouldn't know how to buy a pistol. Can you imagine me buying a pistol! . . . . Where'd I find the strength to make up a lie, my poor darling? . . . . None at all . . . . I'd have to be able to. There're some situations when a lie is useful. You, for instance: if you were to tell me a lie so that our separation wouldn't hurt so much . . . . I didn't say that you're lying. I said: If you were to tell me a lie, and I knew it. For example, if you weren't at home, and you told me that you . . . . No, dearest! Listen . . . . I believe you . . . . I didn't mean that I didn't believe you . . . . Why are you angry? . . . . Yes, your voice is ugly. All I said was, that if you were lying to me out of the goodness of your heart and I found out about it, it would only make me love you more . . . . Hello, hello! . . . . Hello! . . . . (*She hangs up, saying very quickly and in a low voice:*) Dear God, make him call me back. Dear God, make him call me back. Dear God, make him call me back. Dear God, make him call me back. Dear God, make

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(*Phone rings. She takes off the receiver.*) We were cut off. I was saying that if you lied to me out of kindness, and I found out about it, I'd only love you the more . . . . Of course . . . . You're crazy! . . . . Dear love . . . . my dear darling . . . . (*She winds the telephone cord about her neck.*) . . . . I know we have to, but it's so dreadful . . . . I'd never have the courage . . . . Yes. You think you're in each other's arms, and suddenly there are cellars and drains and a whole city in between . . . . You remember Yvonne, she wondered how voices get through all the windings of cords. I've got it around my neck. Your voice is around my neck . . . . The operator'd have to cut us off by mistake . . . . Darling! How can you imagine that I'm thinking of anything so ugly? I know this business hurts you more than it hurts me . . . . no . . . . no, no . . . . Marseille? . . . . Listen, dearest, if you're going to be in Marseille after tomorrow night, I wish . . . . well, I'd like it if . . . . if you didn't go down to that hotel where we used to stay. You're not angry? . . . . Because things that I don't imagine, don't exist; or let's say that they exist in a vague sort of place that doesn't hurt so much . . . . you understand? . . . . Thanks . . . . thanks . . . . You're good. I love you. (*She rises and walks toward the bed, telephone in hand.*)

Well, then . . . . well . . . . I was just going to say "See you soon," out of habit . . . . I doubt it . . . . You never know . . . . Oh! . . . . That's better. Much better . . . . (*She lies down on the bed and clasps the telephone in her arms.*)

Darling . . . . my dear love . . . . I'm being brave. Say goodbye. Come on. Ring off! Ring off quickly! Ring off! I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you . . . . (*The receiver falls to the floor.*)

CURTAIN

(*Translated by Dudley Fitts*)

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Nicola Chiaromonte

MALRAUX AND THE DEMONS OF ACTION

"History. History haunting Europe even as Buddha's interrogation overwhelmed Asia."—Malraux, *Le Musée imaginaire.*

André Malraux has been on the scene for over twenty years. He is still a "public figure" in the most emphatic sense of that term, being dominated by the resolve *both* to obey and to express the imperatives of world history, or, as he would put it, the *destiny* of contemporary man. The author of *Man's Fate,* former Assistant Secretary-General of the Kuomintang, colonel in the Spanish Republican Air Force, commander of the Alsace-Lorraine Brigade first in the underground and then at the front, now intellectual lieutenant of General de Gaulle, has in fact turned the will to be "public" into an ethical principle. From the point of view of a Kierkegaard as of anyone who values "inwardness" above all, this is a most wrong-headed attitude. But then, one of Malraux's main contentions is precisely that modern man has lost all objective (i.e., intellectually justifiable) possibilities of turning inward to a "spiritual reality" of some kind. Nothing is to be found in that direction except formless ambiguity. Modern man must, literally, *do* or die. His situation is an extreme one. Nothing short of a jolt of passionate energy will save him.

It is the constant assertion of this sense of urgency, expressed in a style of exalted intellectual lucidity, that has won Malraux the admiration of so many young (and also not so young) Europeans. Having been forced into one extreme situation after another on the stage of world history, those youths look up to Malraux as to an elder brother who, in a time which has been throughout "a time for despising," succeeded in leading a proud life, one in which doing and thinking were not split but rather extolled as two aspects of the same energy. Whatever one's opinion of his deeds or works, one cannot

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help admiring in the French writer the quickness of that faculty of the soul which the Greeks called *thumos,* "the spirited element." It is precisely because it retains a quality of youthful recklessness in its very errors that Malraux's adventure has the quality of being "exemplary." Or, if one prefers, typical in a very eminent sense.

Malraux's first important work was *La Tentation de l'Occident* (1926). Before that, in 1921 (at the age of twenty-six), he had published *Lunes en papier,* a kind of dadaist fairy tale. But, together with a later work, *Royaume farfelu,* a fantasy on the theme of an exotic Nowhere, *Lunes en papier* has been repudiated by the author and never reprinted. In themselves, these pieces were not particularly significant. If they become significant at all, it is in the light of Malraux's later work, insofar as they help us to catch a glimpse of what he has since consistently striven to keep away from: the realm of aimless sensations and daydreaming, "the fishes of darkness . . . the beings that torment us, the Beasts. . . . They are born out of our boredom and breed boredom" (*Royaume farfelu*). Irrelevant imagery, daydreaming, recur only once in Malraux's work: Kassner, in *Days of Wrath,* being in prison, is *forced* to yield to the upsurge of stray reminiscences. But, however forcefully controlled, and even repressed, the sense of the aimless and the grotesque continues to be a strong undercurrent in his writing. Out of it comes a character who is artistically most successful, the one who represents all that Malraux's heroes do not want to be: Baron Clappique of *Man's Fate.*

La Tentation de l'Occident is written in the form of an exchange of letters between a Chinese traveling in Europe and a Frenchman living in the Far East. The Chinese criticizes the West in terms of a strongly westernized outlook, the Frenchman corrects this in him on the basis of his own awareness of the contrast between the two civilizations. Both know Nietzsche's considerations on cultural nihilism. In fact, they both represent a single character: Malraux thinking of Europe from China. The argument is as tense and as elliptical as anything Malraux has written. The conclusions, if any, are those of an anguished relativism. From Rome, the Chinese writes: "I understand the message of these ruins: he who sacrifices himself participates in the greatness of the cause to which he has made the sacrifice of his life. But I don't see any greatness in the cause except

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what it owes to the sacrifice. In itself, it is without meaning. . . . Is barbarism the less barbaric because it is powerful?" To which the Frenchman replies with a striking definition: "The will to power . . . the consequence of a reverie which would borrow from intelligence the means to force upon the world the acceptance of its folly. . . . [We] are a race committed to the test of the *act,* hence pledged to the bloodiest fate."

Here Malraux is already stating what will continue to be his main theme. The very statement of this theme also contains a radical questioning of it. The Frenchman's remarks imply, in fact, the psychological notion that a man's soul is, to start with, nothing but an excess of dreams and formless desires. The permanence of the external world makes outlines of possible acts from the swarming images. From dream to act, however, there is no rational transition. Dreams breed dreams indefinitely. Only the jolt of choice, action, can put an end to the "pestilence" of desire. After which, what was inane foolishness becomes bloody madness. But man *must* choose between being an individual and being, literally, nobody. Only in action can he find some clear necessity, if not rationality. Such is, briefly stated, the problem of action and its ultimate meaning which all of Malraux's work illustrates.

A number of remarks in the short essay "On Certain Young Europeans" (1927), take us a step closer towards André Malraux's point of departure as a novelist and a man of action. Our civilization, having rejected security in, and submission to, the Catholic Church, and having "lost the hope of finding the meaning of the world in science . . . has been deprived of any spiritual aim." This means the breakdown both of the world in which we live and also of the self, the only reality from which we can start any search at all. The situation is absurd. "Lacking a doctrine, [the young European] has nothing left but a resolute will to give battle. *And there is nothing in that will except weakness and fear.* Our epoch . . . does not dare reveal the core of its thought, which is nihilistic, destructive, fundamentally negative."

An amazingly lucid confession, and one which seems to leave little room for anything but bad faith. One should not forget, however, what is implied in this trend of thought; namely, that the moment we are confronted with a situation in which we *may* hope

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for a meaningful issue, intellectual evidence becomes irrelevant. History, the event, the occasion, transcend all truth. The humiliation of the intellect, in fact, makes Malraux gamble on the deed even as the weakness of the human condition made Pascal gamble on God. "To tie oneself to a great action of some kind, not to let go of it, to be haunted and intoxicated by it" (*The Conquerors,* 1928) is the only issue. A man of any magnanimity cannot do less. And it is Malraux's contention that in our time a "great action" can mean only one thing: *a battle,* and a reason for it.

When he described Fabrizio searching for the battle of Waterloo and not being able to find it, Stendhal was expressing, in his own nimble way, one of the great insights of nineteenth-century sensibility. It was a flash of pure wonder at the utterly paradoxical relation between an individual destiny and whatever general significance might be attached to a "historical event." In fact, it was the splendid illustration of a myth which no historical venture, and no amount of sophistry, has thereafter been able to obliterate from our consciousness. The "epic" moments of *War and Peace*: Prince André lying on the battlefield of Austerlitz; Alapatych at Smolensk; Pierre among the prisoners, comprise a most vigorous apprehension of the same meaning, and of the same myth. The myth is about man and history: the more naively, and genuinely, man experiences a historical event, the more the event disappears, and something else takes its place: the starry sky, the other man, or the utterly ironical detail. That is, the unhistorical: Karataiev and his footgear appear infinitely more significant than Napoleon or Mother Russia. Yet man is inside the event as in a trap. History does not reveal its meaning, but gives way to destiny. We have the paradox of an irretrievable disproportion. For Stendhal, as for Tolstoy, the revelation brings with it an instant of catharsis. Something might or might not follow from it, but the moment of illumination and wonder has a value of its own, and can never be forgotten, or explained away: a stark question has been addressed by the living individual to the historical whirlwind, however mighty or majestic.

Now André Malraux is perfectly well aware of the ambiguity of history. Yet, he depends on the historical to give clarity and form to human action. He is a Stendhalian character determined to have

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his battle, a Jacob who claims to know the name of the angel even before the angel has appeared to him. To start with, he self-consciously asserts the supremacy of the impersonal event over the individual, and the fact that there is only one language that is decisive: the language of history. But this does not make him any less aware of the original paradox. The question raised by Stendhal and Tolstoy is as constantly present to Malraux as his passion for what obliterates it: the rationality of action itself, knowing no other measure than the will to conquer. But, in the end, what remains is the question. The angel appears to Jacob, and he has no name. Malraux's complete works could well bear the title of his latest, unfinished novel: "The Struggle with the Angel."

It is in the light of such radical self-consciousness, and not simply as an egotistic utterance, that one should interpret Garine's exclamation in *The Conquerors*: "I consider my youth the card on which I gamble. If I could cheat, I would cheat." It is Julien Sorel, aware of his own destiny.

Malraux himself began his gamble in Indo-China. He had gone there as an archeologist in 1923, on a fellowship granted him by the Ecole des Langues Orientales, where he had been a student. The demon of action pushed him in two quite different directions. One impulse drew him to make common cause with a group of Annamite students belonging to the nationalist Young Annam League. Malraux wrote articles for their papers and helped them in their underground work. For the local French authorities, this was abominable treachery, especially since the young scholar was using Government facilities to carry on his archeological work. And it was in the course of this work, in 1924, that Malraux was tempted by the realization that there were unchartered regions, in the jungles of northern Annam, where one was almost sure to find ruins of ancient Buddhist temples. Together with a French rough-rider, he conceived the plan of going there and of appropriating whatever examples of Khmer sculpture they could find and take away with them. When he came back, the French authorities lost no time in having him prosecuted for theft of Government property. That would teach the amateur revolutionist a good lesson. Malraux's line of defense was that, since they were not indicated on official government charts, the temples and their bas-reliefs were nobody's property. But this legal point would have been of

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very little avail without the devotion of a small group of friends and of his first wife, who succeeded in having the prosecution withdrawn in the face of a violent campaign by the reactionary Parisian press against the "Communist thief."

"There is a decisive way of being shut off from the human community: it is humiliation, shame," says one of the scholars gathered to discuss the "essence of man" in *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg* (1945), the first part, and the only one published so far of *La Lutte avec l'Ange*. In Indo-China, Malraux came to know humiliation both in his own person and in the fate of the oppressed Indo-Chinese. At the same time, he had the opposite experience of being drawn to others and of finding that he could count on their fidelity; the comradeship which tied him to the Indo-Chinese rebels and to those who stood by him in the moment of humiliation was decisive. The context was an act of revolt against the established order and its rules.

Malraux never wrote a novel about the struggle of the Indo-Chinese. But (until, in 1946, political expediency apparently cautioned him to remain silent) he consistently defended the cause of the Annamite rebels. The "Appeal for Those in Indo-China," published in 1933 was as ringing an indictment of French colonialism as has ever been written.

As for his adventure in search of artistic treasures, it became the theme of *The Royal Way* (1930). Centered on an enterprise whose meaning can hardly go beyond that of a resolute egotistic drive, the novel lacks scope. It has, however, strong and revealing moments. Significantly enough, Perken, the German adventurer who is the hero of the story, and with whom the young Claude has associated himself, is not interested in treasures. He is going into the jungle in order to find a friend of his, who has been lost for months. Perken has conceived the strange plan of founding a native state capable of fighting French domination. What he wants is "to leave a scar on the map." "Hostility toward established values, . . . a taste for the actions of men together with the consciousness of their vanity. Above all, nonconformity . . . " are his motives. But, deeper than this, what Perken refuses to submit to is "limited, irrefutable destiny, falling upon you as a set of rules on a prisoner. . . . The certainty that you will have been *that,* and nothing else . . . my human fate: that I should become older, that time, this atrocious thing, should grow in

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me like a cancer." What he wants above all is "to exist against all this." And that is why he finally meets the absurd: death from a poisoned wound, among savages.

Many of Malraux's critics (both of the Right and the Left) have spoken of his "egotism," or of his "aestheticism." It is becoming more and more obvious that, if one must have recourse to formulas, one should rather say that Malraux was the first to introduce into French contemporary culture the themes that have come to be popularized under the label of "existentialism." He did this, however, at a moment when Heidegger was hardly known outside of Germany, and with a concreteness and a directness that are those of an artist haunted by metaphysical problems, but who depends very little on professional philosophy as such. Certainly, Malraux's intellectual formation owes much to the friendly influence of Bernard Groethuysen, a philosopher of great erudition and wit who enjoyed something like a Socratic position in the Paris of the twenties and thirties. Groethuysen had been a pupil of Dilthey and was very well informed about philosophical novelties. He certainly told Malraux about Heidegger. But Malraux's problems were, in any case, peculiarly his own.

There is plenty of egotism in modern culture, as well as in the "existentialist" trend of thought. Malraux's egotism, however, is of a peculiar kind since it strains continually to break through the barriers of the self and to establish an authentic relation with the world of men, as well as with the universe.

As for aestheticism, Malraux is an aesthete in the sense that art (especially plastic art) is for him the only realm in which man can meet fate on equal terms. But art as a superior form of delectation does not mean much to him. Once again, what he is interested in is the victorious form. In *The Royal Way,* Claude remarks: "Making, as we do, of the artist himself the essential value, we fail to see one of the poles of the work of art: the condition of the civilization which looks at it. As if, when it comes to art, time did not exist. What interests me in works of art is their deeper life, the life made up of the death of men." This is, in fact, the starting point of the recent and very characteristic book, *Le Musée imaginaire*: the battle of art through the ages, recounted by Malraux.

To carry out consistently the impulse of revolt which had taken

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hold of him in Indo-China, Malraux went to China in 1920, where he remained for nearly two years. There, for the first time, he encountered history in the making, a "great action": the Chinese Revolution, or rather the series of insurrections connected with the rise of Chiang Kai-shek to the head of the Kuomintang, which ended up on one hand in the Shanghai massacre of April, 1927, and on the other in the formation of the Communist Army which for twenty years has been successfully challenging Chiang's power. Without becoming a member of the Party, Malraux worked with the Communist wing of the Kuomintang, first in Canton, then in Shanghai, where he performed the functions of Propaganda Commissar of the Revolutionary Committee. Out of this experience came *The Conquerors* and *Man's Fate* (1933).

Those who labeled Malraux an "aesthete" or an "egotist" have also questioned the meaning of the public allegiance he gave for nearly fourteen years (from 1925 to 1939) to the Communist cause. The right-wing critics (from Brasillach to Thierry Maulnier) repeatedly asserted that he could just as well have been a fascist, since he finally was only interested in violent action and warlike virtues. To which Malraux replied that he objected to fascism precisely because it made of warlike virtues the supreme virtues, while to a Communist they were only the tragic means to an end which was the opposite of war or domination. From the left, Malraux was often accused of being kept by "egotistic" reservations from giving a genuine allegiance to the cause. To this, he answered that if revolutionary fraternity meant "indulging in First Communion emotions," he would have none of it. But if it meant to make of human dignity and of human culture the highest values, then it was his chief concern. As for discipline in action, nobody could accuse him of not being aware of its necessity. But this was definitely not a subject of speculation or for artistic enthusiasm.

The truth is that Malraux's connection with the revolutionary cause was of a complex kind. No book of his throws a more direct light on this complexity, and on the ambiguities it involves, than his first novel, *The Conquerors*. Here is the hero, Garine, observed from the outside: "If by a bolshevik you mean a revolutionist, Garine is doubtless a bolshevik. But if you mean . . . a particular type of revolutionist, who, among other characteristics, possesses that of believing

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in Marxism, then he is not a bolshevik." "Doctrinal trash" exasperates him. For Garine, "the revolution cannot be born except from its actual beginnings . . . is, above all, a state of affairs."

The true bolshevik is Borodin: "a great business manager . . . a man who, before each and every thing, has only one thought: 'Can I utilize it, and how?' " Garine obeys Borodin's orders, but this is what he thinks of him: "He wants to make revolutionists the way Ford makes automobiles. This will end in disaster, and before long." There is no doubt with whom Malraux's sympathies lie.

Garine is a man of action unleashed. To him, "there is only one reason that is not a parody: it is the most effective use of force," and there is only "one thing that counts: not to be defeated." He says of himself that he has put "a complete lack of scruples at the service of something which is not my immediate interest." An adventurer? Of a sort. But since he does not seek personal profit, since he has chosen a cause and not a career, Garine finds himself bound by laws that he cannot control. He is committed to his action and to the demons evoked by it. He cannot simply kill and send people to be killed. He must account for his acts, to himself as to others. He must follow to the bitter end the course he has chosen. If he had wanted just adventure, then he is indeed trapped: "Those who want to soar above the earth soon come to realize that the earth sticks to their fingers."

The actual fate of the "great action," the Chinese Revolution, to which Garine together with Katov and Kyo of *Man's Fate* are committed, can be described in a few words. The Canton insurrection, which Garine organizes, is connected with the great boycott of Hong Kong, which threatens the very life of the British Empire. Any successful development of the situation depends on Chiang Kai-shek on one side, and on the Comintern on the other, simply because these are the main forces behind the events. The revolt, one must add, is mainly a revolt of the Chinese against foreign imperialism. The Japanese are looking at it with great interest, but they are as worried as the Western powers by Russia and its Comintern. As for the Communists *on the spot,* they think they can turn the whole situation into a proletarian revolution. When his victories bring Chiang to the point where he must either have a showdown with the Western powers or appease them by dropping the Communists,

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whom he wants to get rid of anyway, he chooses appeasement. Stalin, on the other hand, has ordered the Communists to get along with Chiang at all costs, because Chiang is winning, and because the Soviet Union must prevent the Japanese from being the only ones to profit from Chiang's rise to power.

This being the case, clearly the revolution is doomed. But could what seems so obvious after the fact have been realized by people involved in the day-by-day events? The answer (even in Malraux's account) is "yes." If Garine is so furious at Borodin, it is not because he takes a sentimental (or ideological) view of the "people's cause," but for the simple reason that he considers Borodin's mechanical strategy to be in contradiction with the logic of reality itself. As far as the line from Moscow is concerned, Garine finds himself in a rather "Trotskyist" frame of mind. In *Man's Fate,* the same is true of Kyo, who is so critical of Vologin, Borodin's double: "The Blues are giving the bourgeois what they promised the bourgeois. We don't give the workers what we promised the workers. . . . We will all be massacred, without even maintaining the dignity of the Party."

To the man who is committed to an action because he sees in it the way towards the realization of his idea, the *detail*—any fact that contradicts the logic of his faith—is not just a disturbing incident. It is an utterly distressing and *fundamental* reality. It puts everything in question, and makes the man stop and think, a posture that he will not be able to bear for long. At this point, the question is raised: "What then?" Here is the rub. Should one give up, and withdraw from an action that has become worse than wrong, that has become senseless?

To understand the kind of answer his characters give to this question is to get to the core of Malraux's attitude. The first thing to be said is that neither Malraux nor his characters accept for a moment the idea that one can withdraw from an action in which one has chosen to be involved. By withdrawing, one would become a comedian, renouncing the very substance of identity, which requires acceptance of the fact that life is essentially tragic, not a game whose rules the individual can change at will. The next thing to observe, however, is that the question raised refers not so much to what one should *do* as to what one should *think*: a question of consciousness and of meaning. Admitted that Garine and Kyo have no choice

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but to carry out the mission they have undertaken, we still want to know what has happened to their doubt, how it is being followed up in their minds, and, eventually, in what way it influences their actions. Especially since we are in a novel. (But even in real life that would be an essential question, or wouldn't it?) Otherwise, what kind of doubt would such a doubt be? Purely discursive? Just for the sake of argument?

The fact is that this doubt is never answered in Malraux. It is cut short by action. Not by the *logic* of action, but by the obscure, overpowering force (really, a demon) to which men like Garine and Kyo have yielded the moment they chose their place in history. With Garine, it is his passion for efficiency and power. With Kyo, it is something more vague: the *emotion* of the Revolution in act. Garine has drastic doubts about Borodin's orders. But these doubts do not prevent him from having the terrorist Hong executed, and the moderate Chen-Dai poisoned. Garine wants to eliminate all obstacles to a Communist triumph which, on the other hand, he knows is being jeopardized by the very policies he is carrying out. Clearly, he is not obedient to any practical reason, but is simply offering up victims to a nameless fetish which he calls "Victory." Garine's consciousness might be infected with "Trotskyist" thoughts, but his acts already announce the crazed Stalinist commissars who, in Spain, will make of the slaughter of their ideological adversaries a dogma to which practical reason itself must yield. As far as truth is concerned, Hong is right when, to Borodin who tells him that "the Revolution means to pay the army," he replies: "Then it does not deserve the slightest interest." And probably Chen-Dai is no less right when he calmly tells Garine: "I like to read tragic tales, but I don't like to contemplate their spectacle in my own family. I cannot see without regret my people transformed into guinea pigs. . . . " But then, the argument here does not relate to what is true and what is false.

When Kyo, after his discussion with Vologin, goes to take his place in the insurrection which his reason tells him is doomed, he thinks: "Moscow and the enemy capitals of the West could organize their opposing passions over there in the night and attempt to mold them into a world. The Revolution, so long in parturition, had reached the moment of its delivery: now it would have to give birth or die. . . . " And then he is "seized by the feeling of dependence, the

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anguish of being nothing more than a man, than himself." Kyo is here falling on his knees, performing an act of submission to a suddenly revealed God: the new Allah, the God of History. In fact, Kyo is reminded "of the Chinese Mohammedans . . . prostrate on the plains, covered with sun-scorched lavender, howling those songs that for thousands of years have torn the man who suffers and who knows he is going to die." But, Voltaire would say, "the pain of that angel does not heal us." There is a strange gap between Kyo's interrupted political argument and his sudden communion with the age-old sorrow of man. The one is no answer to the other.

Malraux's novels are characterized by a unique achievement: in them, action, the most opaque and ambiguous of all human facts, is observed and analyzed with the utmost vehemence until it becomes immaterial and transparent, almost one with the workings of intelligence itself. However poignant Malraux's descriptions of violence and death may be, he is not the only modern writer who has been attracted by such themes. What is unique is the resolve to show the mechanics of the action itself *as a historical whole, and* the ideas that move his characters as parts of the action. He says in his essay on Choderlos de Laclos, that Laclos' characters, foreshadowing those of Balzac, Stendhal, and Dostoevsky, "accomplish acts that are *premeditated* in function of a general view of life." Whether it is true or not of those novelists, this certainly applies to Malraux himself. Garine, Hong, Chen-Dai represent not so much Malraux's hesitations as his unmodifiable views of the event in which his characters are actors as well as victims. The conflict between the Communist, the anarchist, and the sage, masks another and deeper conflict: the one between the man who accepts the iron rules of historical action, the individual who rejects them precisely in the name of the impulse which pushes him to act, and finally the person who, like Chen-Dai, "is only capable of a particular kind of action: that which demands the victory of man over himself."

As in Stendhal and in Tolstoy, in Malraux the relation between the individual and the event is a paradoxical one. Malraux's paradox could be stated by saying that the individual moves in an ordinary space, while the event proceeds according to a pluridimensional geometry. There is no knowledge of such geometry save the one that springs from the resolve: do or die. This is why Malraux rejects

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"doctrinal trash": Marxism, insofar as it claims to be a prescience and not simply a resolve. At the same time, he cannot help surreptitiously giving a kind of advantage to the man who, like Garcia in *Man's Hope,* is ready to say: "In times like the present, I'm less interested in the reasons men may have for giving up their lives than in the means they have for killing off their enemies." Garcia is superior to the anarchist because he is prepared to neglect "reasons" in order to organize "means." In the same novel, Manuel appears endowed with a superior kind of rationality because he is ready to take upon himself the death of the two stragglers who are going to be executed so that discipline may be restored in the ranks of the People's Army.

Where Stendhal and Tolstoy stop and wonder because they cannot forget the *detail* out of which springs the revelation of an irretrievable irony or absurdity, Malraux makes allowances for wonder and proceeds. What fascinates him is what lies beyond any individual detail or thought: the general shape of historical destiny in our time and the will to master it. Communist tenacity and ruthlessness interest him in that they represent a peculiar way of bringing together a "reason" which is universal in character and a will which is essentially absolute, knowing no obstacles and no scruples. Yet, the same sage, Gisors, who had said: "Marxism is not a doctrine but a will," added: "You must not be Marxists in order to be right, but in order to conquer without betraying yourselves." There is, so it seems, a point where one must "stop and think": betrayal. But then, how can a will ever be proven wrong as long as it lasts? Where should the resolve to conquer stop, except in victory, or in defeat? And which is the traitor: the man who jeopardizes victory because he refuses to yield his "reasons" for wanting it, or the one who is ready to suppress these "reasons" as hindrances, and thus jeopardize the *meaning* not only of victory but also of defeat?

In Malraux, when defeat comes, darkness is complete. Hope or tragic lament would appear equally futile. There is room only for a last flicker of humanity: the gesture by which Katov gives up to two fellow victims the cyanide that would have spared him the torture of the furnace.

André Malraux is, in fact, the poet of violent defeat. But he shows a significant unwillingness to accept his role. At the end of

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Man's Fate, he has one of his characters, Hemmelrich, make his escape to Moscow and find some solace in the Five-Year Plan. Surely, this is weak, since it presumes the acceptance of a "First Communion" attitude toward such an abstruse enterprise as the Plan. It is curious to see a poet of tragic actions trying to avoid the implications of tragedy. *Man's Hope* was published at the end of 1937, when the Spanish Republic was being subjected to a slow agony, and Stalin had already judiciously stopped all help. Yet Malraux made a point of ending the book with the victory of Guadalajara. Manuel and Garcia could find justification only in victory. They would have become just two more images of human impotence if the author had waited until 1939 and, for example, chosen to end his novel with the scene that took place in a Madrid square a few moments before the entry of Franco's troops: some of the last defenders forming a circle, standing at arm's length, and shooting each other.

(*This is the first section of a two-part article on Malraux, which will be concluded in the August number.*)

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Vernon Watkins

THE WINDOWS OF BREATH

Shine out
Where dawn breaks in the hand,
Windows where thought
Piercing and writing like a diamond
Traced the first sea, the unconsidered sand:
Windows where grief
Touched the white fold, when light's first characters
Narrowing at dawn a lifetime's distances
To the cool pillow's cheek
And impulse of belief,
Discarding constant blood-knit presences
Parted in light oblique,
Stole the black silks of camphored elegy
And white mortality,
The lamp-shroud, falling cloth, the taper's hood:
Windows where good
Sprang to chill dust, veiled light and visionary,
Formed the foretelling tears
I hear and see.
What white hands laid an echo on our ears
Of ghostly burials in the years to be?
There, past the sighing shutters, first they filed,
Those men of history with iron spades;
Then, suddenly to terror reconciled,
The pigeons perched upon the gargoyles' heads.

A rainbow's sheaf
Shone, then was gone, was gone, then shone again,

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A rending brightness from the brandished arc
Bursting out of clouds of rain
On the strange waters lifting that frail ark
Through beat of wing and leaf
To the last summit of all memories lost
By the awakening brain,
Touching the slippers, chair, the stockinged post,
Clock's glass, the whirling mote, the falling grain,
Then last,
Faint lids with darkness overcast
Of moving rainbows, moving out of dark
Into a world of light half-closed
Where half-closed lashes sought a deathless ghost.
There the white breath of day dissolved those flames
Whose rich auroras grew but could not cross,
And sunbeams danced on our remembered names
Cold as clear streams and softer than green moss.

Waking from peace,
First from a shell with all the lights of chance
Out of the coil of whirling waters spun
Miraculous foam and fleece
To lie in the sun,
Its film of sound undone
By the stretched waterfilm that held the first
World of light until it burst
And rolled on darkness as a child may run;
Next from the wounded one,
Stain of birth and radiance,
Out of rough earth, the seed's inheritance,
Out of the ritual dance
Of winds and seasons, rise of sun and moon,
A dedicated, perfect thing
Opening to the common crime,
Summons of the maiming Spring,
Canker of Winter and deforming time,
Compounded with dark earth and cloyed
To exult and be destroyed,

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Prodigal child of dearth's impoverishing;
Offspring of mortality,
Sun-seed and moon-seed, grasping land and sea
In the closed fist, waking from that great tree
Patterned with every fantasy,
Rooted in earth and flowering in the stars,
A demon and a god circling the vase
Of sacred exequy;
And waking still
Out of the rivers of lost light that fill
The martyrs' garden from the saints' white hill,
Waking from deepest burial of the drowned,
And last, from light, the Father, feared, unknown,
This fourfold sleep cast up on barren ground
A shadow's master to full stature grown.

God rose from this,
Shook once the hewn foundations of the world,
Earthquakes, volcanoes, and the bell-like sea,
His marl-made Adam into chaos hurled,
Left grief a mammoth on the spiny scree;
Tied millstones round the neck of avarice,
Filled famine's baskets seven and twelve times full,
Rose from the broken bread,
The consecrated chalice,
Rose from behind the eyes,
Word of all words,
One voice of all the dead,
Made for the false dove-sellers and scale-lovers a scourge
of little cords,
Made the false temples true
And scattered the remembered lies,
Made man aware of his own loneliness,
The prepared logic of his enemies.
He in Job's vision threw
Fixed thought into a moving wilderness;
In terror's heart; too terrible for fear,
He built upon the spiral ear,

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From nerveless rock wrenching the blood's bright way,
The luminous involutions of the fall,
Commingling mortal with immortal day,
Tracked with beasts' ways, the birds' grave ritual.

Shine, windows, shine, a moment has made plain
Truths that were hidden and, if thought, seemed vain:
What ages long
In sockets of old caves
Rocks in their ignorance watched the unlit fall
Of icy waves
Build the stalactite graves
Dropping to annul
The white light in a mildewed funeral,
Five colors, and the harp of muted song.
Out of the spectrum's thrall,
Dome of the skull,
Spring from the fingers, white
Created light
From a transfiguring moment beautiful
Teaches the Past new history; seeds were yet
Unquickened, grains had no direction
Floating for minds to notice or forget
In the winds' circumspection.
Dumb, cavernous mouths, the glacier's blunted tongue
Held silence; then slow figures on a frieze
Saw, through glazed, shuddering colors, lit, made young,
Suddenly life take up the ringing seas.

From grip deathstrong
Whorled life uncoils, ascending like a flower,
Climbs from dark music to the stonecropped land,
Climbs from stilled music to the prisoner's tower
And diamond sorrow scrawled by frost's mailed hand.
Out of night's dumb looms where the blind Shades keep
Their crooked shuttles whence all patterns run,
Out of death's fold and shade, the coil of sleep,
Breath flies, and love's born hands surround the sun.

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Fredrick Brantley

A DISTANT VICTORY

We had established our small Naval hospital in a patched Filipino schoolhouse that had been burned by the retreating Japanese army and had been crumbled casually in spots by our off-shore fire, but during the time I did duty as a corpsman there I seldom tried to imagine its past atmosphere nor to hear in my mind a nostalgic and drowsy pedagogical drone. The village—several ruined gray stone structures blooded by Bougainvillaea buds, nipa huts scattered disorderly as peanut shells, a dark grove of majagua trees, all this quickened by scraggly proud children and game chickens—stretched back from the bay that coiled in from the coast northward of Manila. The bay offered perfect harbor and was rimmed magnificently by mountains that gave it a fictionalized air, and I cannot remember ever lifting my eyes to the entire scene without a nagging sense of tired incredibility. Once or twice, though the hospital was but fifty yards from the beach, I had walked along the shore and in the soiled sand I had noted a rotting side of beef, several water-soaked oranges, an empty Red Cross packing case, and a half-disintegrated Japanese tennis shoe. It was no shore for weeping. The tennis shoe I had thought a discovery, and the funny split-toe arrangement held a momentary fascination that was sad and sentimental. I had carried it dangling from a stick, for we had been cautioned about souvenirs and germs, and dropped it in the hospital yard. For several weeks the shoe was kicked about, ignored by most and eventually by me, and then one day I made a special trip to search for it, but it had disappeared.

The war was over, had been for two months, and the season of drought was upon us: the days pure and filled with glare, the nights a groping black near the earth where we moved, but the stars shone with an exotic luminosity in the sky. The continuity of what we did

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against the pall of waiting I cannot now recall, but we often sat late in the corpsmen's quarters drinking beer and we talked or we did not talk. Many of the men who were certainly more reckless would take off on rambling, sometimes drunken, jaunts through the neighboring villages. They had found themselves women—"bizzness ladees" as the decorous Filipinos called them—and soon there were several, half-hearted it seemed to me, empty attachments.

One of our men, a brutal and muscular blond, had fallen in love with a pretty young girl named Maria Teresa, and he made her quit prostitution, and he had someone in the States send him three expensive blue dresses for Maria. He made her stop drinking, too, although often he would return to the hospital late at night, raging drunk. Once, in the quarters, when he must not have known anyone else was awake in the dark, I heard him sob two or three times. Only when the drunk-cases were brought into the hospital for treatment, and they were always violent, did he show his secret eagerness for brutality. He was the first man to throw himself upon the heaving chests of the unmanageable, slapping them across the face while he repeated mechanically, "Give me a bad time, will ya, give me a bad time, will ya," over and over. He was never happy at the hospital until they assigned him to assist in the operating room and, later, the other corpsmen of the O.R. told me he was damned efficient.

Two "Silver Star boys" who had been in combat with the Marines were attached to our staff, and for their sullen sense of defeat, whether it was a pose or not, I had a hidden admiration even while intellectually I jeered silently at the romantic way they cut themselves off from all connections with "home," as if their pasts were really rich nightmares of evil and the floating faces of the wronged. Those men were the only ones who talked seriously of staying in the islands for life, and they had petitioned that they be discharged from the service there. Fats, our Negro cook, who used to muse upon the same idea, had a Filipino woman who made money on the black market and she, he told us, "Would gimme all that money if I was to come back here after the war and helps her run a big café, gamblin' and whore house all put together in one." But he dreamed of the Harlem bars and the subway trains.

As the days of peace piled up, the routine work of the hospital became less heavy and, except for long, pointless conversations, there

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were few ways to kill time. The corpsmen who operated our makeshift X-ray laboratory were busy every afternoon reproducing by the hundreds every pornographic snapshot they could find: a picture of some giggling Wacs using a field latrine, photo reproductions of old-fashioned etchings of Turkish soldiers in quaint Napoleonic uniforms raping overly-dressed Bulgarian women, just plain nudes, anything. My job while on duty was to handle the daily medical examinations of the groups (like flocks of disturbed birds) of Filipino boys who were trying to enlist in the Navy. The work made me nervous because, when they were rejected, they wore such bitter and yet polite expressions of heartsickening doom. In my free time I wrote letters, or played chess when I could find a partner, or I just talked with Ernesto.

Ernesto was trying to get into the Navy, too, but I kept him on as a civilian worker because he had learned something when he had worked for the Army medics and with his high-pitched, chirping Tagalog curses he could whip the physical examinations into a semblance of order. The men, and he did himself, called him Ernie, and he seemed mildly insulted whenever I priggishly insisted upon calling him Ernesto. I began to use the name only when I wished to appear stern, like the time he was screaming, "Theeze freegin' Flips, theeze goddamn Flips. . . ." "Ernesto," I warned. "Yes," and it was a mean, sibilant sound from his girlish face. "They are Filipinos, you say Filipinos." He blushed quickly, averted his eyes, and he would neither look me in the face nor speak very much for several hours after that. Ever afterwards I suspected dimly that he carried a small, cherished hatred for me for that. He walked fragilely with his arms held up and before him like a young girl entering a strange room, and it was a teasing shock to hear him chatter away proudly at the long list of heterosexual and scatological profanities he had learned from us.

That afternoon, which even now returns and clogs in my mind and peace, I was talking with Ernesto about his favorite subject, life in the States, and his attention had turned to the large dance bands. He was eager to impress me with his knowledge.

"They will have great buildings, is it not, to which the people may come for dancing, and a great polished floor, large as a rice field in the valley, my seester tells to me in her letters, and in California they will for one American dollar permit you to attend the dancing,

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is it not, and the thirty or maybe more musicians sit upon a beeg stage at one end. . . ."

"In a big flower," I said, "a stage built like a big, purple flower."

"How is that?" His face was puzzled, then it lightened. "Ahhh, yes, a very beautiful flower."

"A flower," I repeated. "It's made out of painted beaverboard."

"And the girls? Will they not be very beautiful for you? White hair that is shining which they will fix with things which they buy in the drugstores, I know this, but it is very beautiful all the same. In California. . . . "

"Sluts," I said wearily.

"What is this? What does it mean?" His face darkened in bewilderment before he grasped the meaning of the word by the tone of my voice. "In California," he pleaded. "Miss McKinsey," and his voice took on the irritating little pedantic quality, "the army nurse who is very good friend of mine when I work for the dispensary of the army—I have told you of this—would speak to me much about the young girls in the States. In this now I am not speaking of beetches!" The way in which he said *bitch*—it was sexless in reference—was a crevice opening into a part of himself corrupt and sophisticated I had not thought existed.

He dug into his dungaree pocket and brought out in his slender palm a gold locket. "It is a gift to me from Miss McKinsey," he explained, and I pondered a moment how he had stolen it. Inside the locket was a miniature picture of an attractive, middle-aged woman in a trim nurse's uniform. "She would tell me many times about the dates she had in the States," he explained, then furtively: "I have gone many times to her tent in the evenings when she would show me the pictures in her photograph book. It is not allowed that men go into the nurses' tents, did you know this?" He glanced slyly into my face, his features set in an unbelievable innocence, and my mind played rapidly over all possibilities of this weird and perverted situation at which he had hinted.

"Miss McKinsey is a very kind person, very kind and beautiful, do you not think, and she told me when she left, 'Ernie, you promise me now and be sure to write me.' "

"Did you?"

"No, I am very busy and I only write to my seesters in Baguio.

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My seesters are very nice and clean girls and wish to be teachers in a school. They have taught me to sew."

We were sitting in the treatment room of the hospital. The lazy, warm quiet of the afternoon palled the activity of the whole building. Two other corpsmen sat at one of the treatment tables, playing a desultory game of cribbage. From behind the closed door of the X-ray darkroom came the muted murmur of voices.

Murphy, the tall, scrofulous-looking pharmacist mate in charge of the X-ray lab, came out of the darkroom, crossed to Ernesto and me and slapped down upon the table before us a still limp enlargement of a snapshot. "Take a look at that, will you," he commanded. "Some snatch!"

The photograph glinted faintly, the light catching in the lingering moisture of the developer. It pictured a rather large but not bony woman standing completely naked in a narrow, rocky stream, a stream just like the ones I used to see on weekend liberty trips into the low Sierras outside Los Angeles. The woman wore an intangible expression of torpid eagerness, but I had the feeling she hadn't known quite what to do with her hands when the picture was taken. You could see the slow, cool break and ripple of the water above her ankles. I looked at her, trying to show more interest than I felt in the snapshot. She had too much pubic hair, as I guess most peasant women must have, but it did match the dull, darkish hair of her head.

"This ain't one of them professional pictures," Murphy said. "This here is a nice girl, one of them decent babes everyone had for a shack-up deal back stateside, back in pretty California."

"It was made from a Kodak picture, wasn't it?"

"Sure," Murphy sniggered. "One of them little old box gadgets you take with you on picnics and weener roasts."

"Where'd you get the original print?"

"Offen a chief laid up in Ward D. He traded us a couple pictures of his old girl friends—must be getting rid of his past. Traded 'em to us for taking a couple shots of him all dressed up in his new chief's cap to send to his old lady."

Ernesto was standing rigidly at my side, in one of his rare quiet moments, staring over my shoulder at the photograph, and he seemed to be almost holding his breath.

"What do you think of it, huh?" Murphy asked him.

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"No nice girl, no nice girl," he sing-songed vehemently. "Old slut," he spat out and glanced at us to see if we noticed the new addition to his virile and American vocabulary, then, sadly: "She does not look very young and she would be very much nicer and very much more beautiful in a red dress. But I will not look at it any more." And he left us, moving with those precise, dancing steps of his, walking as if he wore high heels. He disappeared and I did not see him for the rest of that day. I felt gently disappointed and cheated because I had intended to send him to the hospital galley for coffee and cinnamon rolls for us.

"He's some cutter," laughed Murphy, "your Flip helper!"

Alone, I could not face the ordeal of writing my mother so I walked down the runway connecting our Quonset-hut wards, hoping to find someone for a game of chess. Thompson, who played a foolishly reckless and unorthodox game, was on duty in Ward D, and he was slouched over the ward desk, his mouth slack, apparently doing nothing but listening to the soporific whirr of the fan. We set up the board and the men on the desk.

Thompson led out with his Knights, but I opened cautiously and built my men toward a standard "fool's mate" position. "You're always playing so damn careful," Thompson commented dryly. "It ain't no fun that way."

In several moves he had worked his Queen out and down deep into my territory, intending to split up the shaky defense I had started to construct. But he had given little thought to protection for his Queen, left defenseless out in the open, and, although I was frightened for a moment, I saw a way to trap his Queen and keep myself out of trouble. I could not help congratulating myself.

"You seen that Kodak picture them boys in the lab got?" he asked me.

"Yes," I answered as calmly as I could.

"Real good, it's really good," he said without enthusiasm, flatly.

"The chief they got the original print off, he's in your ward, isn't he?"

Thompson jerked his thumb to his shoulder, motioning. "There in the fifth cot, the guy with all the hair on his chest. He's been around, that Joe, and got more women in California, I bet, than he can use."

I studied the sleeping man. He was stretched, upon his back,

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out on the cot, and he seemed viciously stiff like a corpse. He was clothed only in his drawers. One arm, thrown back across the pillow behind his head, was splotched red with merthiolate. From where I sat I could see his wide lips move slightly with the rhythmic suspiration of his breathing. Hovering in the still air were the sounds of his tiny, rasping snore.

We continued our game, but Thompson had surrendered any notion of an orderly, well-planned attack, and he was merely playing at random for my men, like checkers. I realized an habitual impatience and irritation was growing in me, a mood that would leave me, I knew from experience, drained, feeling like a bundle of snarled string, out of sorts and with no interest in anything.

"You know," said Thompson solemnly, "dammit if it ain't a good idea for a man to have had him a lot of bags 'round back home like that chief. You get to thinking about all them weekends you spent with a fifth of whiskey on the table and you in bed with them women and it gives you something to sort of hang everything together with in your mind. You ever try thinking about all that happened a year ago and see what a helluva mess you remember. Dammit, you can put it together in your mind, just let your remembering jump from one beautiful lay to another."

Thompson's face, staring blankly, was vacant and stupid as he mused contentedly upon this idea which had come to him and to which he had given life and truth by his spoken words.

"For Christ's sake," I said, "play the game of chess."

Before I knew it, he had, just by making his foolish moves without caring at all for victory, captured both my Knights (one I had intended to be a sacrifice) and my King's Bishop. In fury I concentrated upon the game enough to trap his King and finally bring him to a checkmate.

But I was still angry. "That's the last game with you," I said, "the last damn game."

"Aww," he said, "now don't get sore. You won, didn't you?"

"I'm not sore."

"What you need," and Thompson waggled his head, "is a nice little old girl friend, maybe one that's part Chinese."

From the mess hall, during the evening meal, I watched the five

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mountain peaks, Cinquas Pintas, which rose from the distant side of the bay, become purple and somber with the massing rain clouds while I ate in silence. An oppressiveness gathered in the murky saffron gloom of the late afternoon. The natives believed it would surely rain whenever Cinquas Pintas was obscured by clouds, and already they were assuming that opaque vagueness of Oriental prints, peaks merging from neither sky nor sea nor land. A muffled, rumbling thunder broke longingly over our unreal land.

It will rain, I thought with relief, and perhaps I can be quiet tonight and feel apart enough from everything to write letters. I hurried from the mess hall to the treatment room, anxious to occupy one of the tables before the card players settled at them for their nightly games.

I though of Ida, Ida Miller, who taught in the primary school of my small, upstate home town. I suppose Ida was not what you would say "going with me," but we had grown fond of each other. We first met because we were both interested in the activities of the local historical society, one of my most enduring hobbies. There were times when I thought she and I were the only ones with a passion for the work of the society. I wrote most of the few pamphlets that we prepared during the year before I was called into the service. I had been reminded of my work when I visited the unkept and jungle choked graveyard beyond our Luzon village. The graveyard was called the Pantheistic Cemetery, and a nearly obliterated sign over its gate told me, "Those Who Do Not Honour the Dead Will Not Respect the Living." Over the past five years before the war, it must be, Ida had made numerous trips with me to visit the older homes or families around our county. Sometimes, on Sundays, she would visit my home and have dinner and an afternoon of cards with my mother and me. During the war she regularly made up parcels of tinned foods, newspaper clippings, candy, and the brochures printed by the state historical society to send me overseas. She rarely wrote. Thinking of her and the intangibility of the situation, I had a desire to laugh shamefully at myself, but I began the letter, writing in a small, neat script:

Dear Ida,

The last time I wrote I was on duty on the destroyer, and now I have been transferred to shore where life is different but more com-

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fortable, and I can, at least, visit the ruins left by the war. I suppose the comfort was the reason I have missed writing you for several months. I will show you all my photographs of the destruction of the war when I return home. On my journey to this station our ship stopped at Zamboanga. There is a rather crude old song about the girls of Zamboanga, but perhaps you will not remember it, Ida, and besides it is far from true anyway. I was disgusted by the way our sailors behaved towards the natives. The natives were very interesting, and I was astonished to learn that they really have no sense of history, absolutely no idea of the past. . . .

My mind wandered, and I could not continue the letter. Outside the thunder persisted, swelling into more prolonged reverberations, and the fast descending, sometimes terrifying, tropical night had come. The brilliant overhead lamps of the treatment room were flicked on, making me blink nakedly as I sat there musing, trying to peer into the black beyond the windows. I gave up hope of finishing the letter to Ida Miller that night.

A group of corpsmen, now off duty, were lounging in the room, debating whether they should go to the village, whether they would be trapped by the rain before they could reach the short row of hastily constructed "nite clubs" where there would be a few girls, whiskey, and music. We were all in the room, not talking loudly, when a member of the shore patrol brought him in.

There was a silence in the room, but I noticed nothing unusual at first.

Behind me, one of the men said softly, "Well, I'm damned to hell. It's the enemy."

I looked closely at the man who had just entered, prodded through the doorway by a shore patrolman who was belted heavily with a cartridge belt and holster. The S.P. stood blinking, too, in the sudden light and his confusion. He turned to the dwarfed, cadaverous, brown-skinned man who stood listlessly at his side, and, pointing with his club while he cursed aimlessly, he indicated that the man was to take off his Filipino-style straw hat. That done, he poked the man forward to the desk of the night corpsman in charge.

"He don't understand English very good," the shore-patrol sailor said to the room at large.

The man was one of the few Japanese soldiers I had ever seen face to face. A green Marine skivvy, nearly worn out, hung loosely

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from his scrawny shoulders about his slight chest. His lips, the color of his face, were stretched upward, forcing his mouth open to display his upper teeth as if he were having a dental inspection. It was not anything like a smile. His eyes were directed over and beyond the night corpsman's head. His Jap army pants were ragged and nearly bleached from too much dirty water and sun. He was barefoot.

"Don't understand a word o' English," repeated the S.P., "but he could use a little of your medical attention right now, I guess. Been runnin', ain'tcha son, for a couple days and nights through them jungles in the pass. His legs all tore up like he'd been a wild cow loose in a cocklebur or a blackberry patch. He sure had figured the war was over for him, though, 'cause he had taken to the mountains, not to fight, you hear me, but to find him a Flip woman with a shack and a acre o' land and dammit if sonny boy here ain't shacked up with the woman and already plowing his nice little rice field. Whatta you know!"

The corpsman echoed, "Well, what do you know about that now?"

"He'd been up there yet," the S.P. said, "if some Flip hadn't found him out and come down to tell us."

I said, "He must be one of the last ones hiding in the mountains."

"Yep," said the S.P., "he oughta be the one."

The Jap soldier was led to one of the benches near a table covered with bandages, drugs, and a few sterilized minor-surgery instruments.

"Undress," the corpsman ordered. "Tell him, or do something, will you, to get them leggings off so I can treat him."

The S.P. pantomimed and gestured until the Jap soldier understood what he was to do. His leggings, puttees like the ones I knew from the dark and fading snapshots of my cousins in the last war, made him seem grotesquely out of date and place. He removed the puttees carefully, slowly until the S.P.'s "Hurry up, goddammit, chop chop!" stirred him along.

We formed a disinterested ring around the three: the S.P., who self-consciously rested his hands upon his hips just above the sagging cartridge belt, the corpsman kneeling coldly to examine the Jap's legs, and the Jap soldier standing as if he were alone.

"Looks as though," one of the men in the circle commented,

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"he should've been working away mighty anxious at that rice crop."

Laughter, brief and explosive, broke from the increasing circle of men.

The corpsman swabbed the ulcerated sores on the soldier's legs, dusting them with sulfa powder. Over two of the rawest sores he placed temporary dressings. "Well, let's see how the rest of his body looks. He's probably scratched to hell like this all over."

The S.P. forced the soldier to remove the rest of his clothes and he stood, his clothes folded in a neat bundle at his feet, stripped before us. Like the thin buttocks of an infant babe, his behind was withered, but from poor diet. His eyes were like two pieces of wet coal stuck in the untelling flatness of his face, and they did not seem to notice either the relentless dazzle of the overhead lamps or us.

"Wait a minute," said one of the men and he ran to the X-ray lab. He returned holding a gigantic enlargement of the photograph of the chief's girl friend that I had been shown that afternoon. He was grinning, "Let's see how he likes things in the States!"

The sullen quiet of the group dissipated instantly. Several began to move around the Jap soldier excitedly, edging closer and closer to him who merely kept the frozen, dental no-smile that he had assumed when he first entered the treatment room. "Show it to him, show it to him good. Let him see some of that stuff," the men called joyfully.

Murphy took the picture in both his hands and held it up before the face of the Jap soldier, the picture of the girl who was a trifle too large—but a few inches away from the soldier's eyes. His fatalistic composure did dissolve, I am sure, but one could not detect it except for the fact that his eyes roved wildly a few seconds like spilled black marbles rolling around.

"Why, he don't understand," said the S.P. "He don't even know what it is, I believe. You know how their women are made different. All he wanted was to get him a nice little Flip tail and an old rice field."

The restraint of the circle of men was gone, the men now crowding close to the Jap soldier, chanting to him their happy, lewd cries. "Don't he see it, don't he see it at all?" "He sure is in a good way, buck naked like he is, to be looking at a piece like that." "Look at it, dammit, look at what men cry for!" He would have reacted

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the way they desired, I think now, had he any knowledge of what they wished, but he did nothing.

He is our prisoner, I thought. One of the enemy that has sworn to kill us, and we have captured him.

The dressing of the lacerations and ulcers finished, the corpsman who was working on him stepped back from the prisoner and indicated that he was to put on his clothes. Either because he had entirely dismissed from his mind the scene before him or by the knowledge that he was to dress, the prisoner's fright was gone, and the stolid, blank expression had returned to his face. He dressed himself hurriedly.

The shore patrolman led him out of our curious circle and towards the door. "Gotta get him back 'fore both of us get caught in this rain coming on," he said. At the doorway, as though he had recalled something arresting out of his childhood, the S.P. halted the prisoner and made him turn around and face the group of us, motionless in the center of the room. "Where's your manners?" the S.P. asked. "Ain't you gonna thank 'em for fixing you up like that? Bow to 'em, bow to 'em," and he made quick, comic bowing motions himself.

The prisoner took off his native straw hat and bowed low to the flooring, in our direction.

Fleetingly, for an embarrassing moment of fear, I felt as though, in the strained and hushed room, I were going to bow in return.

The prisoner had bowed ponderously three times and, before I could realize it, the pair of them had disappeared through the doorway into the night.

Some of the men who had gathered in the room during the excitement began to wander off, and several of us went out upon the porch behind the O.R. to watch the weather and to catch the fresh coolness of the winds now springing up from the bay. A few minutes later the rain began, the large drops slanting downward faster and faster, and soon I listened to the forlorn rattling of it upon the tin roof. It soughed softly as the clean streams of rain impinged on the dry earth. Cluttering delicately among the monstrous paperish leaves, the wind and the rain swirled the banana trees massed ominously in the hospital yard.

"This will be an all night rain," one of the men said drearily.

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It was so dark I could not locate him, only hear his unplaced voice.

"Hell," another said, "it'll break the heat. I got a good mind to get out in it and get myself sopping wet now."

We lingered in silence, then the corpsman who had spoken last stepped from the porch and began to run, caroling like a child, around the yard in the steady rain. One by one we joined him, and our dungarees, drenched quickly, clung to our stung but glowing flesh. In the dark and fresh wetness of the night our idiotic voices were sharp and tuneful like children at an exciting game.

But the night rain, as if some hand unknown and hidden in the vast darkness above ourselves had swept it capriciously away, ceased abruptly. Yet our elation was strangely buoyed even further when the rumor spread that the system for discharging personnel had just been revised. All of us began counting again the number of months we had been in the service or overseas, calculating the earliest possible date when we should return. I walked from the hospital to the beach because, in my dazed contentment, I somehow wanted to be by myself to enjoy it. I can recall to this day the air of festivity there was to the sight of the distant lights on the ships anchored far across the bay. They seemed to me at the time, I remember, like garden-party lanterns, like those at high-school graduation parties when across finely cropped lawns we, in our blue jackets and white trousers and the girls in their most daring organdy gowns, strolled clumsily, and where in something like wonder we gazed wide-eyed and cruelly at each other.

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LONDON LETTER

Dear Editors: The spring in London was warm and sunny. The bright mornings brought into the shopping streets many young women in gay dresses, with long skirts and tight waists. They looked conspicuous, self-conscious, but were undrab and amusing. Nearly every street has some houses shining with new paint, making the others look even more crumbling than they did before: but there are workmen everywhere slowly roofing, plastering, and digging drains. They keep on steadily between nine and five with no sense of urgency or strain: they seem to work happily knowing their jobs are secure, and if the foreman is unpleasant they can always walk out and start with somebody else. There is an atmosphere of unemphasized personal dignity and independence. Among the builders large cups of strong tea are drunk at intervals throughout the day and on the bigger jobs a boy is especially employed, by the men themselves, to make it. A recent inquiry has produced the surprising fact that the average public house customer drinks two pints of beer at midday and six pints every evening.

The Labour Government is proving itself to be well-intentioned and surprisingly open to suggestion. There was a moment, for example, when the badly bomb-damaged Nash terraces in Regent's Park were going to be pulled down, but through the protest of people like Cyril Connolly (who wrote letters to the *Times* and held a tea party, for ministry officials, about it) the lovely shattered façades were saved. Now there are many hundreds of men working away at restoring these beautifully impressive and elaborate Palladian mansions. I noticed the other day that the work is being expertly supervised and details like the proportions of the window panes and the proper replastering of the ornamental pediments are being taken seriously. Unfortunately most of the houses, but not all, will never be lived in again: they are to be government offices.

It is ironical to have to add that *Horizon* has itself been recently in great difficulties over finding a new office. Their old one had to be

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given up because it had a bathroom and could be used as a living flat. Having discovered two adequate rooms the publishers of the magazine found themselves involved in a difference of opinion between the Local Housing Committee and the Ministry of Housing and in the end it took the influence of a senior Cabinet Minister plus a long standing personal friendship with the landlord for them to be allowed to rent them.

The shortage of houses is by far the greatest hardship of the working class. Rents are controlled at a reasonable level, but for a man and wife and children a decent room in someone else's house, sharing the kitchen and bathroom, is almost as completely unprocurable as a self-contained flat. Apart from this, the working class is better off, and individually more self-confident, than ever before. Although food is rationed there are canteens and "British Restaurants" where the meals are good, cheap, and unrationed. In country districts there are many ways of improving on the basic amounts allowed. A few good clothes and nearly all the forms of entertainment are now, for the first time, within the means of the average working-class family. One sign of the improvement is the fact that over six hundred pawn shops are reported to have closed down during the last five years, and the secretary of the National Pawnbrokers' Association said recently that the pledging of clothing and bedding on a weekly basis (which was very prevalent) is now as dead as the dodo.

The middle classes are worse off than ever: they pay very high taxes and their normal pleasures—hospitality, motoring, and comfortable holidays at home and abroad—are restricted to a thoroughly depressing minimum. Nowadays the middle class wife spends nearly her whole time queueing for food, and cooking and cleaning. If those who have young children are sometimes able to employ a nurse, then they have an extra (rather exacting) person for whom to cook and clean. In London, though less so in the country, the rigors of middle-class life are mitigated by a morning cleaner who can, in most cases, be found to come in and help for several hours a day.

I have the impression that the rich are still living pretty richly. Once a man's income has reached the level at which he can afford servants, and provided that his wife is not too scrupulous about how she gets her extra clothing coupons, his family can live almost as well now as it did before the war. Stockbrokers and racehorse owners are especially well placed because they can arrange to have practically no income, and thus pay little income-tax: they live mainly on "capital." Big business men can often double and treble their real income by paying

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themselves enormous expenses. The streets in the middle of London seem as crowded as ever with large cars though the new spectacular American ones, with their backs looking much the same as their fronts, generally carry the CD plates of diplomats. More sedate, and grander, Rolls Royces are also everywhere: perhaps because doctors, who are earning huge fees, are allowed to charge a car and a chauffeur against income tax. In England today the classes who feel the pinch of taxation the most resentfully are the financially successful writers, painters, and actors, and elderly people living on interest from investments. Stafford Cripps's capital levy is being taken very calmly; the few people I know who are well off enough to be caught by it are using mildly bad language and accepting their losses.

Restaurants and night clubs are not doing so well as a year ago, largely, I think, because the people who can afford them are more settled down into their peacetime lives. Good antique furniture is wildly expensive, the prices being pressed up by the steady native demand for it and the rapacious American locusts who for the last two months have been clearing the shops. This situation only upsets a very small proportion of the population and to the country as a whole the dollars earned are desperately necessary; but to have to sell up our chairs and tables is a sad result of glorious victories in two world wars.

In spite of this capital levy good paintings (and also the Royal Academy ones) are selling well. Barbara Hepworth, who has devoted her life to abstract sculpture, has suddenly produced an exhibition, at the Lefevre Gallery, of exquisite paintings of doctors and nurses performing major operations. They are presented, without the least gruesomeness, in pencil and water color and greasy crayon. Her tense figures with masked faces and capable bony hands are beautifully drawn in the traditional manner. Robin Ironside, a younger painter, is exhibiting a dozen or so large water colors stippled in the most minutely detailed style—which derives from Doré, the Pre-Raphaelites, Beardsley, and Surrealism. This fascinating combination produces an original result. The most impressive of the pictures now at the Redfern Gallery is "The Death of the Poet Cinna" which shows a decomposing, nude, and emaciated poet dead on top of a coffinlike mound covered with a huge tangled mantle; which reminds one of a neglected bed of twisted weeds and flowers and poisonous thorns. The melodramatic atmosphere of the Ides of March is suggested by sinister happenings high up in the terracotta-colored, dreadful, thundery sky. The elaborate lush "decadence" of Ironside's pictures might not be so interesting if it were

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not for his brilliantly accomplished detail and finish. In London it is a relief to see an exhibition by a younger painter who is unaffected by the ubiquitous, aesthetically paralyzing, Picasso influence. It seems as if Picasso's greatness, like a rich wine, has made bilious nearly a whole generation of his successors. However Augustus John, whose first exhibition in fifteen years is now at the Leicester Galleries, has reverted (after a few experiments with faintly post-Impressionist still lifes) to his earliest manner—romanticized Irish and Welsh peasant girls in wild gray landscapes. His harsh portraits of men are still excellent.

The most interesting news of the day in literature is George Orwell's new long novel. I have seen two chapters of it and have the impression that this will be his most important work so far. Unfortunately it is going very slowly because Orwell has been dangerously ill, and is still not recovered. A course of streptomycin injections was in the main successful, but it has left some unpleasant secondary complications. I heard from him in his hospital in Scotland a week ago and he is still only able to get up for an hour a day.

There is a rumor that E.M. Forster has finished a new novel. If it is true it is indeed something worth writing to America about. Philip Toynbee, whose *Tea with Mrs. Goodman* was so very well praised last year, is lying fallow; except for a few scintillating reviews. Cyril Connolly is also between books. Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*—about morticians (both animal and human) in Hollywood—appeared early this year in *Horizon*. Nearly everybody enjoyed it. The only exception I know was the review in a dingy dutiful little monthly called *Our Time*, which is run by crypto-Stalinists. Their cantankerous review is interesting because it is an example of the completeness with which the artistic fellow travelers, and travelers' travelers, have swallowed the Zhdanov line with regard to the arts—showing up their pretense, in private conversations, that Communism in the West could not in matters of culture be expected to be subordinate to Moscow. It is useful to contrast this unconditional surrender (some of the contributors to *Our Time* are people who used to know better) with the very cagey policy of the Stalinists on questions of straight politics and economics. They are abusing the policies and leaders of the Labour Party but are still pretending to support, conditionally, the government and the production drive. They dare not "isolate themselves from the masses" by adopting the full Cominform line and pronouncing themselves honestly anti-Labour. They merely execrate every principle for which the Labour Party stands and insinuate a little monkey wrench or two, in the form of minor strikes, into the productive works. After a Cominform attack

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last autumn on the British CP's rather languid fight against the Social Democrats, Harry Pollitt, the former Secretary of the British Communist Party, made the usual abject confession of guilt and unworthiness—and seems to have carried on since in much the same way as he did before. I think he has a big new slap coming to him fairly soon.

Clement Attlee has made an important speech in which he said categorically that the Communists were not left-wing Socialists but extreme reactionaries and they should be treated more as fascists than as Labour dissidents. This is an idea that was implicit or explicit in most Social-Democratic statements up to 1935, during the years of what the Stalinists called "Social Fascism." The point was made theoretically long ago but there was a new note of practical conviction in this recent pronouncement. Many people in England are now less sure than they used to be that it is necessary to give freedom of speech and association to those, such as the Communists for instance, who intend to use this freedom to establish a dictatorship. About the strongest argument (weak as it is) against outlawing the Communist Party is that it is safer not to drive the conspirators underground. During the last few months the number has been increasing of those who consider this argument invalid because in fact an important proportion of the CP has already submerged. This discussion has been stimulated by the results of the Italian elections. While there is a sense of relief at the semi-failure of the Communists, it is more obvious than ever that as long as the Stalinists are able to compete for power in democratic parliaments they have always a chance, sooner or later, of gaining the crucial ministries of war and the interior. The recent history of eastern Europe shows that it takes a very short time after this stage for the *Politburo* to move in.

Apart from the discussion of these grim issues the intellectual stream in London flows slow and thin. There is nothing in the least like the bursting iconoclasticism of the early twenties. However an important, really revolutionary, book about proper names and the ubiquitous problem of verbal meaning is projected by Professor A. J. Ayer, author of *Language, Truth and Logic.*

Humphrey Slater

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ART CHRONICLE

THE NECESSITY OF THE OLD MASTERS

It is assumed that modern literature, whatever its novelties, remains continuous with the past. It is also assumed that anyone who presumes to write poetry or fiction is not insensible to the virtues of the poetry or fiction of the past, even though he himself may—and should—want to do something different. We would doubt seriously the competence of any poet writing in English who felt that Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, and Wordsworth were of no concern to him; and if that poet did prove himself competent we would find it a paradox.

The situation, in this country at least, does not seem to be the same in painting. Many young and more or less advanced painters—competent ones—appear to have been left indifferent by the pictures from the Kaiser Friedrich Museum that were shown in Washington and New York recently (and which are to be shown in other American cities through the summer and early fall). Some did not even go to the trouble of seeing them. And also, I know people who, though revealing judgment of a high order when it comes to any painting done since Matisse and Picasso, are insensitive to the merits of even the Impressionists.

The explanation of this is not as difficult as it might seem. Since Impressionism, painting in western Europe and America has been engaged in unraveling its own tradition and in the process it has been able at moments to accept traditions of art other than those of the West. Literature, being tied to language, cannot maneuver that freely. Language is the product of a certain people, place, and past, and remains bound to that past. The writer who would use his language well is forced to acquire a sense of what has already been done with it. After all, language is *usage*. Painting is not—or not to the same degree. Since it has freed itself from the necessity of representation, painting seems at liberty to reject all but the most recent past; it feels that it has made a new start and created a new instrument for itself.

I myself believe this is an illusion and that the advanced painter

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cannot withdraw his attention from the past with impunity. Cézanne to the contrary notwithstanding, the moderns are not the primitives of a new tradition, but the liquidators of an old one. Abstract art is still western European art; one still—even if only barely—paints easel pictures; one does not decorate Haida cloths or make sand drawings. An artist working in New York or Paris still cannot introduce Oriental, archaic, or barbaric elements into his work without modifying them radically to fit the terms of easel painting as established by a tradition that goes back to the end of the Middle Ages and is not yet dead. The greater the artist's awareness of those terms, the greater is his power of self-criticism, even if he paints like Mondrian—who was himself by no means indifferent to the old masters. And it is the failure of self-criticism, a failure deriving in part from the inverted historical provincialism of the "modern," that accounts for some of the most serious shortcomings of contemporary advanced American art as a whole.

Whereas in the past we were provincial in our attitude toward the art of other civilizations or cultures, today our best young talent runs the danger of becoming provincial toward the past art of our civilization. Modern art has not in actual practice repudiated that past art as much as many of us think. It is still necessary to be very much aware of it, if only to overcome it. And in so far as we still paint easel pictures to hang on walls, we still have more in common with that past, down at bottom, than with the art of Africa or the South Seas.

The exhibition of the Berlin pictures—which, before fifty-two paintings on wood and metal were substracted from the lot to be returned to Germany, had the highest frequency of good items I have ever seen in so large a group—demonstrates this indispensability of the past with a certain timeliness. Beginning with the Italian primitives and stopping with Watteau and Tiepolo (except for a magnificent Daumier and a fairly good Manet, both from the Nationalgalerie in Berlin), it affords a succinct and pure impression of the essential character of the Western tradition in painting. We see a world whose depth, resonance, and plenitude are the product of illusion—of perspective, chiaroscuro, underpainting, glazes, scumbles, etc. The single picture is a projection of all reality and makes itself felt as something heavy and full-bodied and inward. These qualities modern painting has sacrificed to intensity. Whereas the Renaissance picture draws you into a statement of a complex of relations between various areas of experience, the post-Cubist picture thrusts a sheet of pigment at you with an immediate force proper only to the realm of material sensations.

Modern art, like modern literature and modern life, has lost much.

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In some directions it has more than compensated for the loss, developing its own complexity and its own—far more subjective—inwardness. But as one brought up on the past (like everyone else), I cannot help regretting what has been lost. The regret is futile, yet I believe that this nostalgia for the past, responsible though it has been for academicism, has also been a vital ingredient of the greatest advanced art of our times. The artist immune to it has that much less to struggle with, but he is also so much the poorer for his immunity. A certain dosage of nostalgia, a certain twinge of academicism, the very struggle against it seem to me to have been indispensable to both Matisse's and Picasso's greatness and to have contributed to the superior largeness of their art (and I do not mean here Picasso's excursions into Ingres and the antique, but something far subtler and more intimately involved with his temperament). Not that the work of the modern artist must by any means resemble the past; but that he must show some sense of it, a realization of its presence and attraction. Otherwise he dissipates himself in sheer quality and fails to impose that order and shaping which are the indispensable concomitants of high art, and without which the truly cultivated spectator is left thirsty. High art resumes everything that precedes it, otherwise it is less than high.

Among the fifty-two Berlin pictures returned to Germany were some of the strongest of the entire group: particularly Rubens' "Perseus Frees Andromeda," Bosch's "St. John on Patmos," Botticelli's "Madonna and Child with Singing Angels," Dürer's "Portrait of a Young Woman," Jan van Eyck's "Giovanni Arnolfini," Gossart's (Mabuse) "Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane," Holbein's "George Gisze," Lippo Lippi's "Madonna Adoring the Christ Child," Simon Marmion's two altar panels, and Antonio Pollaiuolo's "David with the Head of Goliath."

But enough still remains—or remained at least to be shown at the Metropolitan in New York. I would draw attention especially to Altdorfer's (an ancestor of Klee's painting) "Nativity," Messina's portrait, the unknown fifteenth-century Austrian master's "Dead Christ," Giovanni Bellini's "Resurrection" (as poorly unified as this picture is), Bouts's "Madonna in Adoration," Bronzino's "Portrait of a Young Man," Castagno's "Assumption of the Virgin," Cossa's "Harvest Allegory," Cranach's "Frau Reuss," Elsheimer's "Noah's Thank Offering" and his landscape, Geertgen Tot Sint Jans's amazingly green "John the Baptist in the Wilderness," Giorgione's portrait, Giovanni di Paolo's three small panels, Guardi's "Balloon Ascension," Patinir's "Rest on the Flight to Egypt," Rembrandt's "Man with Golden Helmet" and his landscape,

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Koninck's and Ruysdael's and Rubens' landscapes, Sassetta's St. Francis episode, Ter Borch's "Concert," Tintoretto's "Man with Long White Beard," Titian's "Self-Portrait," Velasquez's portrait, Vermeer's "Pearl Necklace," all three Watteaus, van der Weyden's two portraits, and Konrad Witz's remarkably delicate yet firm "Crucifixion."

There are, in addition, some fifty or sixty other very successful pictures present—and I say successful advisedly, for the old masters can be as uneven as the modern ones. In view of the notoriously bad taste usually shown by museum officials in the field of modern art, one is amazed to see how largely right the specialists attached to the Army were in deciding which pictures of the Berlin collections deserved most to be saved from the Russians. Perhaps it was because they were guided by tradition. . . .

While I am on the subject let me advise those still interested in the old masters to pay a visit to the Philadelphia Museum, something I myself had the opportunity to do for the first time only recently—and sympotomatically enough, in connection with the Matisse exhibition there. The Johnson, Wilstach, and other collections make the Philadelphia Museum's painting section superior in quality to that of the Metropolitan, and in some respects, particularly the Flemish primitives, it can more than hold its own with the National Gallery in Washington.

Clement Greenberg

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FILM CHRONICLE

PAISAN

The force of *Paisan* is in certain images of danger, suffering, and death that remain in one's consciousness with the particularity of real experience. Like the stacked dry corpses of Buchenwald or the clownish figure of Mussolini hanging by the heels, these images have an autonomy that makes them stronger and more important than any ideas one can attach to them.

In the Sicilian episode, a few American soldiers pick their way in the dark along some vague path beneath a wall, crouching slightly, talking in whispers; one of them chews gum rapidly. Various qualities belong to the men: they are young; they have a certain motor efficiency that makes them appear in general well-trained, courageous, and intelligent; they exhibit a solidarity that is practical rather than emotional, resting on a common-sense acceptance of their situation; they are in innumerable ways "soldierly," masculine, and American.

In an American film, these men would be "GI's"—the rough and serviceable vessels of democracy; their personal qualities would be expressed through contrived and carefully differentiated patterns of symbols and ideas (one of the group might be a little comical, and another "spiritual" or "cultured"; one might be named Rosenbloom, and—at the very best—one might be a Negro); and their presence on the coast of Sicily would be given some specifically "universal" relevance (probably the episode would begin with shots indicating the scale of the invasion, and then move in to pick up this "representative" group). But here the qualities of the men and the nature of their situation are inseparably contained in the particulars of their physical presence—for example, the way the large and ungraceful helmets diminish the faces beneath them, forcing one to see each man as a whole body, with his "personality" expressed in movement and in the details of his clothing and equipment; or the astonishingly flat and metallic voice of the leader, at once childish and self-assured, suggesting a lack of sensitivity that may be appropriate to his function; even the chewing gum is for once

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not a symbol of value but simply a fact of nature. And the situation of the men—removed from the elaborate political, moral, and military framework that an American director would use to give it "meaning"—becomes also a part of the screen image, a visible fact of experience: these moments of tension are among the possibilities in a man's life.

This quality of "existential" truth is vitiated later in the episode, when an attempt at communication between one of the soldiers and an Italian girl is used (in a typically "American" manner) to draw vague populist sentiment out of a purely accidental limitation, as if there were some great truth still to be discovered in the fact that one person speaks English and another Italian, and yet both are human beings. But the earlier quality is regained in the treatment of a group of German soldiers and in the image of the Italian girl herself, whose large and somehow undefined body—to an American eye, almost repellent in its lack of physical charm, and at the same time disturbing in its persistent suggestion that charm is irrelevant—becomes the leading visual element of the episode. At the end, when this body is seen for a moment dead and sprawling on the rocks, hardly more ungraceful than when it was alive, it contains in its visible presence the dramatic meaning and conclusion of the episode (the product of war is always a corpse, but always a *new* corpse)—though Rossellini's fundamental lack of taste permits him to spoil this effect with a final scene of cheap irony.

In the Florentine episode, there is a moment when a group of partisans captures two Fascist snipers. A confused knot of men bursts around a corner into the sunny street and moves rapidly toward the camera, growing larger and clearer. One man is dragged along by the shoulders, kicking and struggling; another, erect, is propelled by blows that force him to move ahead as if he were part of the group, rather than its object, and shared the general desire to bring matters to a quick conclusion. Just in front of the camera, the men are thrown to the ground and left for a moment inside a small circle, the camera pointing downward at their backs. One of them cries, "I don't want to die!" There is a burst of machine-gun fire, and the scene is over.

This scene moves so rapidly that the action is always one moment ahead of the spectator's understanding. And the camera itself remains neutral, waiting passively for the action to come toward it and simply recording as much of the action as possible, with no opportunity for the variation of tempo and the active selection of detail that might be used to "interpret" the scene; visually, the scene remains on the same level of intensity from beginning to end, except for the increasing size and clarity of the objects as they approach the camera—and this

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has the effect of a "natural" rather than an interpretive variation. The speed of the action combined with the neutrality of the camera tends to exclude the possibility of reflection and thus to divorce the events from all questions of opinion. The political and moral distinctions between the snipers and their captors do not appear (even the visual distinction is never very sharp), and the spectator is given no opportunity to assent to the killing. Thus the scene derives its power precisely from the fact that it is not cushioned in ideas: events seem to develop according to their own laws and to take no account of how one might—or "should"—feel about them.

The final episode, which describes the defeat and capture of a group of Italian partisans and American OSS men on the Po River, is full of these strong images: a corpse floats down the river, held up by a life preserver, with a crude sign—"partigiano"—stuck behind its shoulders; a baby walks among the unresponding corpses of its family, crying as if it will never stop—only the baby and a dog remain alive; a hanged man sways and turns quietly in the wind, while the other prisoners, lying on the ground below him, talk in whispers ("What will they do to us?" "I have wet myself like a baby."), and the legs of a German guard move back and forth in the foreground; a row of prisoners stands at the edge of a boat, and the Germans push them off one by one to drown (but in this there is perhaps too much contrivance; Rossellini slows up the tempo a little, and one is allowed to become aware of the beauty of the shot).

Again there is no room for ideas. All questions have been decided long before the episode begins, and to reaffirm the decisions would be as irrelevant as to reconsider them. All that matters is the events themselves in their character as recorded experience: not why these things happen, but the fact that they happen, and above all the particular forms of their happening.

I began by suggesting what might have happened to some of Rossellini's material in the hands of an American director. Since the film is concerned throughout with relations between Italians and Americans, this contrast is particularly relevant, and I should like now to carry it further.

American culture demands victory; every situation must somehow be made an occasion for constructive activity. The characters and events in serious American films are given a specifically "universal" or "representative" meaning in order to conceal the fact that there are situations in which victory is not possible. The idea survives—that is a victory;

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the man dies—that is a defeat; the "GI" is created to conceal the man's death.*

But *Paisan* is the product of a country that has known itself compromised and defeated for (at least) twenty-five years. In the presence of Mussolini, Victor Emmanuel, and the Pope, no public myth could survive; all action and all ideas of action became contemptible, and the sensitive Italian was forced into idealist philosophy or into the cultivation of personal experience—that is, into a passive and aesthetic attitude to life. (See Guido Piovene's remarkable article in the March *Horizon.*) Even an active political figure like Silone reveals in his novels a distinctly masochistic relationship to the very political realities he opposes; in the United States, only Southern and Negro writers (for obvious reasons) ever approach the utter self-abasement represented by Silone's portraits of the peasants with whom he identifies himself.

Rossellini neither requires nor dreams of victory; indeed, it is only defeat that has meaning for him—defeat is his "universal." (Even *Open City* is conceived in terms of passivity: heroism is presented not as the capacity to act but as the capacity to suffer; the priest and the Communist are one, and the activity of the underground leads not to victory but to sainthood.) From this hopelessness—too inactive to be called despair—Rossellini gains his greatest virtue as an artist: the feeling for particularity. In the best parts of *Paisan,* it is always the man who dies, and no idea survives him unless it is the idea of death itself.

One more point may make this contrast clearer. In the three good episodes of *Paisan* (Sicily, Florence, the Po River), there is very little effort to individualize the characters; each displays only as much of himself as his situation requires (the most important exception to this is the conversation I have already mentioned between the Italian girl and one of the Americans in the Sicilian episode). And since the situations are abnormal, the activities of the characters do not in any full sense represent them: they remain strangers. Certain of them stand out because they are more continuously prominent in action, but there are

* A typical figure in our culture is the "commentator," whose accepted function is to make some "appropriate" statement about whatever is presented to his attention. "Grim evidence of man's inhumanity to man," he remarks of the corpses of Buchenwald. "The end of the road," he says as we stare at dead Mussolini on the newsreel screen. (And what can one do but agree?) Even in its most solemn and pessimistic statements, this voice is still a form of "affirmation" (its healthy tone betrays it); at bottom, it is always saying the same thing: that one need never be entirely passive, that for every experience there is some adequate response; at the very least, there is always—there must be—something to say.

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important characters who appear only momentarily—for instance, the German soldiers in Sicily or the partisan leader Cigolani in the Po River episode. But the reality of these figures does not depend on "characterization"; they come to the screen full-grown, and are as real in ten seconds as they could be made in half an hour—they are *visibly* real. (The stranger one sees on the street is no less real and no less individual because one does not know him.) In American films, on the contrary, the characters are likely to be emphatically individualized, and precisely because they are basically abstractions: without character traits and personal histories, they would disappear.

But the rejection of ideas is also a rejection of principles. Rossellini has no intellectual defenses, and when he attempts to go beyond the passive representation of experience, he falls at once into the grossest sentimentality and falsehood. The monastery episode, in which three American chaplains (one Protestant, one Jew, one Catholic) are taught some lesson—humility, perhaps; certainly not tolerance—by a group of Italian monks, is so outrageously vulgar that it must surely be the product of a calculated dishonesty, probably for political reasons. And the dishonesty is made all the plainer by the fact that a view of the Church such as no politically sophisticated Italian could seriously advance in his own name is here presented through the eyes of three simple-minded Americans (what little intelligence they display among them is all given to the Catholic); by this device, Rossellini tries to preserve his "neutrality." (A similar tenderness for the clergy appears also in all the other Italian films I have seen: *Open City, Shoeshine,* and *To Live in Peace.* Piovene suggests that the key factor in Italian "bad faith" is a refusal to deal honestly with the issue of the Church.)

But the sentimentality goes beyond any single issue. The "message" of *Paisan*—after all, it does have a "message"—is that the whole meaning of war (indeed, the whole meaning of history) is suffering and death. Moral and political differences are obscured: the death of a Fascist equals the death of a partisan, and, as Siegfried Kracauer points out, the American liberators look much like the German conquerors; even the German officer of the Po River episode is presented sentimentally (and therefore with relative success; Rossellini's complete failure with the sadistic German officer of *Open City* is evidence of his inability to deal with real moral distinctions). This view of war is always valid: Falstaff is more nearly right than Prince Hal, and Thersites than Ulysses. But it is also a view that has a special attraction for a defeated Fascist nation, and Rossellini cannot restrain himself from taking a special

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advantage of it; there must always be one more push—and it always destroys his position, for if death and suffering are not *in themselves* the greatest of misfortunes, then we are back in the field of politics and morals, and it is Prince Hal who is right. Thus, in the Sicilian episode, after the Italian girl is dead, there must be the final scene to show how cruelly she has been misunderstood. In Naples, it is not enough that the Negro and the Italian child are both suffering; it must be shown that *even* an American Negro is shamed before Italy's misery. In Rome, it is not enough that the prostitute and the soldier are both unhappy; the prostitute must be the *very same girl* that he remembers from his first days in Rome and has looked for in vain; and at the end we must see him throw away her address with a sneer: "Just the address of a ——."

A number of Americans collaborated with Rossellini on this film, and their influence is apparent—not least in its sentimentality. But the strength of this American element is a sign not so much of the corrupting influence of America as of the accomplished corruption of Italy: only the fact of defeat is Rossellini's own; beyond that, he must nourish himself at the table of the victors. And there is a significant difference that betrays the nature of this relationship. American sentimentality is rarely without a note of aggressiveness: I am a small man *and* I shall inherit the earth (this must be one of the things that impress Europeans as hypocrisy). But Rossellini transforms this into complete passivity: I am *only* a small man and I have suffered terribly.

From this point of view, the six episodes can be plausibly interpreted as representing the fantasies of the eternally defeated as he tries anxiously to read his fate in the countenance of a new master. In Sicily, the Italian girl is rejected: the American does not know that she was really his friend, and the one who could testify for her is dead. In Naples, the American finds his heart overflowing with pity: he *understands;* he, too, has suffered. In Rome, the Italian girl is rejected again: she is a whore; she has not waited. But in Florence the American nurse presses the dying partisan's head to her breast; and in the monastery, the arrogant victor is humbled before the simple goodness and wisdom of those who have chosen to exempt themselves from history (see Piovene again). Finally, on the Po, the American is at last both loved and loving, directing the Italians in their struggle and then losing his life in a protest against their murder.

Robert Warshow

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MUSIC CHRONICLE

"PETER GRIMES" AND THE FUTURE OF OPERA

The libretto of *Peter Grimes,* the opera composed during the war by Benjamin Britten in England and presented at the Metropolitan Opera House in February for the second time in America, has as its central figure a sadistic, egocentric fisherman. Pursuing his calling with pathological relentlessness, he works his apprentice boys to the point where one of them dies from exhaustion. Persecuted by village gossip, which calls him a murderer, he seeks to recover his reputation by amassing a fortune—which would mean respectability. This leads him to drive his apprentices even more mercilessly and another boy dies in an accident. At this point Grimes bows to his fate and scuttles his ship.

Britten has described the story as that of "the struggle of the individual against the masses" and Edmund Wilson has written that the opera gives one the situation of "the whole of bombing, machine-gunning, mining, torpedoing, ambushing humanity which talks about a guaranteed standard of living, yet does nothing but wreck its own works, degrade or pervert its own moral life and reduce itself to starvation." If this point is to be grasped at all—and successful projection of such a social problem in *Peter Grimes's* limited libretto certainly requires a great deal of sensitivity and imagination on the part of the audience—it is solely in terms of Grimes's behavior. For Grimes is pitted against society because he is pitted against himself in a vicious psychological circle in which the correction of one neurotic act only leads by an inexorable chain to another, more neurotic, one.

The composer is concerned with projecting the drama faithfully, and to do this he employs a melodic line that imitates, and is derived from, speech inflection; this gives the work its fundamental musical style. But when carried to the orchestra the prosody tends to sound static, since the flexibility of the instruments is not exploited sufficiently. Musically, the great asset of the plot is its atmospheric quality which Britten evokes by symphonic orchestral interludes in the manner of a Romantic tone poem, and by the interpolation of authentic sea-chanties.

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Rhythm and harmony are kept at a simple level. "Modernism" creeps in shyly through dissonances in the dramatic climaxes and the occasional use of polytonality. The classic differences between major and minor keys are blurred somewhat but the basic tonal relationships as we know them from Romanticism are never entirely dispensed with. This preservation of traditional tonality is imperative to Britten's treatment, since it is the only possible basis for a clear, homophonic melody, which, in turn, is the only way to project a story clearly and sharply.

For all his occasional modernisms Britten is an heir of Puccini. Sometimes he imitates Puccini's techniques directly, as in the opening, which is almost a replica of the opening of *Turandot,* and in a dramatic duet which is sung independently while a song from the Common Prayer Book resounds from a nearby church. This device patently smacks of the first-act finale of *Tosca,* in which the drama unfolds to the sounds of the *Te Deum.* Moreover, Britten even shapes his melodies according to the dramatic lyricism of the Italian master. His only departure from *verismo,* from Puccini's realism, is to include, perhaps for the sake of greater structural coherence, absolute forms of music in the orchestral interludes.

In the final analysis *Peter Grimes* places itself in the stock tradition of grand opera, a form of art that, at every important juncture of its evolution, acted first and foremost as the vessel of ideas of the social stratum that supported it. The grand opera had always emphasized its dramatic over its musical content. When in the sixteenth century Peri and Caccini devised the first of all operas for the Camerata, a group of rich Florentine traders, they hit upon a melodic line that would reflect every nuance of speech inflection. Soon afterwards Monteverde created homophony practically singlehanded in an effort to project his operatic plots with even greater vividness. And Gluck, although inclined towards abstraction, insisted also on subordination of music to poetry in opera.

Beginning with Wagner, however—that is, by the time the middle class had achieved all its political and economic goals—the social ideas that had given the form its content began to lose their dynamism. The attention of opera, hitherto something of a rebel among the arts, was henceforth deflected to the great middle-class problem of discomfort in civilization, and faces us suddenly with a realism that invokes sympathy for heroes whose suffering stems from their unconventional, antimoral attitudes. Boris Godunov is a usurper, La Traviata a harlot, Tosca a woman who betrays her lover, Wozzeck a murderer. In siding with the socially culpable, opera becomes a symbol for the estrangement of man from the morality which the middle class has made.

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This is a new and complex idea, much too complex to be projected in the standard clichés of operatic language. Only strict realism is convincing here, and the story requires the utmost clarity and exact definition in terms of place and time. Atmosphere and text become even more important ingredients than before. And thus more than two hundred and fifty years after its inception we see opera veer again towards prosody. (In classicism, especially Mozart, the text had to be constructed according to the symmetry of the musical theme. But in the later prosodic treatment the melody draped itself around the words like tights.) In Moussorgsky this is formulated theoretically and practically. His operas reek with the atmosphere of folklore and his vocal line is a direct imitation of Russian speech. Although this is not so obvious in Puccini, his lyric vocal line is different from Moussorgsky's terse cadences only to the extent that the harmonious Italian language differs from Russian.

Peter Grimes is one of the end-products of this tradition of disenchanted verbal realism. Social discomfort is embodied in a sadist; the plot is placed in a specific time and a specific locality; prosody is carried to the limit. But *Peter Grimes* comes at a time when the aesthetic of *verismo* does not fit that of twentieth-century music. Monteverde's homophony, though originally motivated by literary consideration, actually rescued music from the excess of luxuriance and vagueness which characterized the late Renaissance; and the symmetry of plot and the shaping of the ensemble numbers in Mozart's operas still conformed to the principles of classicism. Wagner's mysticism resulted in a new harmonic conception that widened the horizon of Romantic music. Moussorgsky's realism gave a fresh rhythmical impact to Russian music and even Puccini's *verismo* was not out of place in a world in which the *cantabile* of Romanticism was still ascendant.

But the twentieth century brings with it a new kind of highly intricate and involved tonality and, with it, a return to the more abstract forms of music. Alban Berg tried to solve the contradiction between realism and abstraction by introducing large, absolute forms such as the sonata, the fugue, and the variation in his operas *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*. If these forms were convincing in these works, they were so, not as absolute music, but because of the great dramatic energy with which the composer had endowed them. Being too large and unwieldly to be perceived as musical forms in a stage drama, the sonata, fugue, and variation affected the listener in Berg's operas by the dramatic meaning they contained.

Britten likewise senses the contradiction involved here and he tries

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to resolve it by confining abstract forms only to the orchestral interludes. But the libretto of *Peter Grimes* deals with a situation the meaning of which can be understood only in the context of latter-day psychology, and the intricacy and complexity of which cannot possibly be presented through the chiaroscuro technique of *verismo*. Thus *Peter Grimes* is aesthetically anachronistic, psychologically inadequate. The most it arrives at is melodrama in the Hollywood sense, which is all that such an attenuation of the nineteenth-century *dramma lirico,* however affecting, can be.

The operatic problem for the composer is how to make dramatic action understandable by means other than words. One way would be the return to the Mozartian conception of musical symmetry, where musical clichés act as symbols of characters and events and become understandable through stock forms similar to those of the *commedia dell'arte*. The other is the way Stravinsky—who is always aware of the pertinent problems but never succeeds in solving them to complete satisfaction—has indicated. In Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat,* the decisive dramatic moments are danced and in his *Les Noces* a chorus in the pit accompanies a pantomime on the stage. In both works the action is made clear not only through pantomime or dance but also through familiar musical forms, such as the march and ragtime in *L'Histoire* and the Russian folk tunes in *Les Noces*. De Falla similarly drives stylization and stagecraft to the limit in his pantomime *El Retablo de Maese Pedro,* when he has marionettes enact the drama to the accompaniment of the orchestra. In both his and Stravinsky's cases, music is dramatic without being explicit, while the action is made articulate without being literal.

Problems of such nature are the vital considerations of modern opera. In *Peter Grimes,* however, Mr. Britten shows no concern for them. Instead, he is satisfied to dress up an old formula with an occasional modern device and thus has given us what is, however competent, only a new version of *Grand Guignol*. Strange that this superficiality should have led even some of opera's enemies to believe that *Peter Grimes* might be the dawn of a new era of music drama.

Kurt List

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BOOKS

A PEINE MA PISTE

T. S. ELIOT: A Selected Critique. Edited by Leonard Unger. Rinehart. $5.00.

This is a much larger and better collection than the one edited by B. Rajan last year in London. It brings together essays, reviews, passages from books, under a number of the most active names in modern criticism: Pound, Richards, More, Wilson, Forster, Winters, Ransom, Aiken, Tate, Mark Van Doren, Blackmur, Cowley, Van Wyck Brooks, Matthiessen, Leavis, Spender, Cleanth Brooks, Delmore Schwartz, a dozen others. Not all these distinguished critics, indeed, are here at their best, and nothing is printed for the first time, but the book contains most of the best known studies of Mr. Eliot's work and will be useful. It would be more useful if it were sensibly arranged, and had a full, dated table of contents, and an index; if to the check list at the end of writings about Eliot were added some list of Eliot's writings, since much of his interesting prose is uncollected and few readers will have the bibliographic check list published at Yale last year by Donald Gallup; if, willing to overlap Rajan with Cleanth Brooks's account of *The Waste Land,* Mr. Unger had further overlapped to reprint Wolf Mankowitz's notes on "Gerontion" (a very difficult poem, of which no sufficient account is to be found here) and Helen L. Gardner's commentary on *Four Quartets.* But he has nothing so servile, nothing quite so servile, as the essay in Rajan on *Ash Wednesday*—which glosses justly, however, the "aged eagle" fumbled by various critics; and I will not dispute his selections longer, except to say that Wyndham Lewis is a startling omission, and one perhaps related to the scanting of Pound, who has three pages, against Mr. Unger's forty-five, and whose essay "Mr. Eliot's Solid Merit" is not even listed. One observes a certain desire in the universities to disinfect Mr. Eliot by ignoring his disorderly and animating associations; I do not suggest that this is deliberate in Mr. Unger (who gives space to several wild onslaughts against Eliot), but instinct may have prompted carelessness. Of the fact that among

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thirty-one contributors there are no women, while half of Rajan's British contributors are women, I can make nothing.

A little surprisingly, the best introduction to Eliot is still Edmund Wilson's, from *Axel's Castle;* and perhaps the most brilliant essays in the book—those that should be read next—are Schwartz's on Eliot as culture-hero and C. L. Barber's on the substance and failure of *The Family Reunion.* It is interesting, and casts a hard light on our criticism, that none of the contributors felt the need to compare him at length to Wallace Stevens (whose verse also exhibits French Symbolist and Elizabethan derivation) nor even to Yeats; the most judicious comparative study I know of his criticism—to Arnold's—is one not listed here, by M. L. S. Loring in the *Sewanee* (Autumn, 1935). With reservations already made, and two others to come, Mr. Eliot's work is fairly displayed, and there is even a comic piece, not uninteresting, T. H. Thompson's pursuit of Sweeney, while both Ransom and Spender are witty on occasion, Ransom gently, Spender (this was in the thirties) rather irritably. I think these two studies are more damaging, their wit aside, than the elaborate demonstrations by Yvor Winters and D. S. Savage. That is, all four men score off Eliot in certain ways, but only the first pair can be said to survive for the reader to enjoy their gains.

Frontal assaults upon a character so formidable are bad strategy. Mr. Winters is formidable himself, but he makes scarcely a breach. It was not thus that Eliot set to work on Milton; he just nudged, until finally Mr. Leavis (who can take a hint), under the real impression that it was all over, was able to announce that "The dislodgement of Milton was accomplished with remarkably little fuss." Of course this is not one of the happiest aspects of Mr. Eliot's criticism. There is something inevasibly amusing about the passage at the end of his British Academy lecture where, after reaching earlier in the lecture unprecedented heights of humility, with kindly arrogance he permits young poets again to read Milton. At the same time, the whole episode displays his exceptional power, and even where he looks most unguarded he has invisible seriousness in reserve. Thus when he suggested a comparison between *Paradise Lost* and—*Finnegans Wake,* a leader in the *Times Literary Supplement,* predictably, mocked it as a move to retain his old following. But this was Eliot inveterate and serious, the same critic who recommended Stendhal once as the best introduction to *Troilus and Criseyde,* and still the best living critic by far, as his magnificent essay on Kipling sharply shows. I think myself that a good deal of what has been taken literally in his criticism can be qualified as polemical, and that there are broad misproportions to be righted, but time will be required for the

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demonstration, and it ought to be accompanied by a lively sense of his immense achievement.

A lively sense. It must be confessed that the unrelievedly pious exegetical studies that cluster towards the end of the book do not make very lively re-reading. They quote Eliot's other verse and his prose appositely and endlessly, they make much plain, they deserve all our thanks, but even when they have important thematic subjects (as Mr. Unger's second paper and Louis L. Martz's) they clutter the subjects and wear them out and will not select or compare or jump. Eliot is found "unified" and "impersonal" everywhere, unutterably "traditional," and so on, all his favorite commendations. I found more to think about in Ferner Nuhn's three pages on *The Waste Land* than in Mr. Brooks's thirty, worthy as the thirty are. Mr. Nuhn says the poem is mock-heroic. This is no frivolous suggestion, nor is Yeats's kindred remark that "He is an Alexander Pope"—it wants thinking about. *Was* an Alexander Pope, let us say. For Eliot's mind is grievous and profound beyond a single poet's; "I must move on," like Sweeney and *Harry* "I must move on." And critics will have to follow, wherever, wherever. "He had left the procession," Yeats says further—the good traditional Eliot—and, who knows yet, possibly he had. Mr. Eliot, who knows some things about himself, knew from the beginning he would be hard to follow.

C'est à grands pas et en sueur
Que vous suivrez à peine ma piste.

Not grubbing, but: with grand strides, sweating, you hardly will pick up my trail. Perhaps we have not got it yet. Perhaps in the end this poetry which the commentators are so eager to prove impersonal will prove to be personal, and will also appear then more terrible and more pitiful even than it does now. The all but incredible truth, I believe, is that we have seen in our own time two of the staggering individual developments in all poetry, first Yeats's and then Eliot's.

John Berryman

PREFABRICATED CRITICISM

THE ARMED VISION. By Stanley Edgar Hyman. Knopf. $5.00.

Like William Y. Tindall's *Forces in Modern British Literature* and Frederick Hoffman's *Freudianism and the Literary Mind,* Stanley Hyman's *The Armed Vision, A Study in the Method of Modern Literary*

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Criticism, has the advantage of pre-emption, of getting there first with a survey that was needed academically, and that no one else would then want to do, in the same way at least, for another five years or so. Hyman's book is better than the other two, I think, more thorough and devoted to its material. The value of *The Armed Vision,* simply as a chart or reference book, is suggested by comparing it, for example, with John Crowe Ransom's *The New Criticism,* which came out in 1941. Where Ransom had four categorical figures, Richards, Eliot, Yvor Winters, and the ontological critic who is wanted, Hyman has twelve: Wilson, Winters, Eliot, Brooks, Rourke, Bodkin, Caudwell, Spurgeon, Blackmur, Empson, Richards, and Burke. Where *The New Criticism* listed about 200 references in its index, *The Armed Vision* lists over 1,700, and has in addition a selective bibliography of some 400 books and articles.

Hyman's work is an elaborate essay in "placing" critical methods. When he speaks in his own person, especially when he castigates and adulates, the results are sometimes pretty unhappy. But most of the time he is preoccupied with tracing critical ancestries back through the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries to Renaissance and classic criticism, with relating his key figures to their literary sisters and their cousins and their aunts, and with naming methodological heirs. In all this he reports so fully the critics' own acknowledgement of indebtedness, and what they think of each other and of a second critic's criticism of a third, that any reader, unless subject to rapid-survey vertigo, will find the book a useful conspectus, exciting him to make his own reconstructions. Hyman has read widely and painstakingly enough so that any reader, even though he has kept up with the critical quarterlies and sharply disagrees with Hyman's own judgments, will find interesting material he has missed, and tendencies he needs to revalue.

At first glance, the order of key figures in *The Armed Vision* seems strange, but the personal invective in the early chapters, which are the poorest, shows that the order is a gradation, rising from those whom Hyman considers lazy, dogmatic, inconsistent, partial, impure, like Wilson and Brooks, to the learned, laborious, crafty manipulators of the multivalenced and polysemantic, like Blackmur and Burke. Although this gradation is made in the name of critical seriousness, it takes on a boyish, party-line tone in practice. Criticism of Blackmur or Burke by Kazin or Levin or Hook is described as "stupid," "intemperate," and "venomous," and those guilty of it are linked with Henri Peyre, J. Donald Adams, and admirers of Edgar Allan Poe. Wilson and Kazin are the lowest of the low, and whenever one of his heroes refers to them at all

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favorably, Hyman inserts an exclamation point or a parenthetical apology. He suggests that Wilson and Levin are probably plagiarists, and following Granville Hicks's article in *The Antioch Review,* has a great deal to say about Wilson's personality, including the fact that he was once rude and overbearing at the dinner table. The writing of the editors of PARTISAN REVIEW "has become largely a kind of ethical nail-biting." Brooks is a "narrow and embittered old gentleman with a white moustache" and Eliot "a sick, defeated and suffering man." In these chapters, including the one on Eliot, the terms fuzzy, arbitrary, contradictory, foolish, and laughable are constantly used.

In the later, better chapters, Hyman's values appear more positively. "Insight" is the key word, appearing as many as four times to the page. An insight, seizing on a clue in a work of literature, produces a new configuration. The more clues, insights, configurations, the better, discovered on as many levels and from as many perspectives as possible. By this standard Blackmur, Empson, Richards, and Burke are the four best critics. An insight won't simply come of itself, it has to be worked for, and Hyman admires Blackmur's criticism as the best example of sheer grinding. In approaching a poem by Wallace Stevens, Blackmur lists all the hard words and then "goes openly to the dictionary and looks them up." This gives him the clues. In discussing "the Malatesta family in the *Cantos,* Blackmur refers to four books on them he has apparently read, three in Italian and one of these unpublished." "Empson reads a line of Shakespeare quite literally against a potential background of every other line he wrote." This is what most impresses Hyman; speaking of Blackmur's reading of Eliot's *Ash Wednesday,* he urges Tate, Bowra, Van Doren, and Wilson to "ponder the fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper."

He knows, of course, that insights come not only from knowledge, but also from the use of schemata drawn indifferently from all the arts and sciences. "We ought scrupulously to risk," Blackmur wrote, "the use of any concept that seems propitious or helpful in getting over gaps. Only the use should be consciously provisional, speculative and dramatic." Where Blackmur is maddeningly pretentious, dull, involved, guarded, hedging, in his use of such concepts, Burke is free, bold and assertive, making a brilliant figurative and linguistic analysis not only of the literary text but also of the terminology of the interpretive schemes he uses, getting perspective by incongruity through translating these schemes into terms of each other, economic for amatory, metaphysical for ecological, and the like, and the whole comic business held together only by the transcendental pentad of his grammar.

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Hyman praises Burke, however, for the same reasons he praised Blackmur: "Our faith here must lie in Burke's genuine humility, the ironic humor that keeps him backing away from his own machinery." Such statements explain the real grounds for many of the personal attacks in *The Armed Vision,* and they become fully evident in the brief concluding section in which Hyman constructs, hypothetically, "an ideal modern literary critic out of plastic and light metals." Hyman would syncretize the virtues of all the critics he discusses, but would husk away Eliot's "religious and political bias," "Winters' obsessive morality," "Miss Bodkin's mystic and religious emphasis," which he speaks of as a crotchet, and so on. This is not so much because he disagrees with these particular ideas. He uses the same tone in referring to Wilson's "obsessive theme of Stalin," and in declaring that Marxism, to be useful in criticism, must be *neutral* in character. Hyman is fascinated by the idea of the elaboration of a detached, impersonal, self-sufficient methodology for the analysis of literature and for the multiplication of meanings, a methodology that can become more and more collaborative and institutionalized. What he is disturbed by—and this explains the intensely personal nature of many of his attacks in the book—is the idea of criticism as a man judging a work, a man fully human, fully implicated in life, with purposes and beliefs, and making a total response to the book he is reading. For this no categories suffice.

Robert Gorham Davis

REGARDS TO THE ACTUAL WORLD

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORLD TODAY. By Paul Valéry. Translated by Francis Scarfe. Pantheon. $3.50.

Paul Valéry's strongest habit of mind was an exact and exacting meditation on itself, or through itself upon the actual world. It was a basic bias of his mind, and part of his charm, to affect never to write for the public except by request, for some occasion. He was an *occasional* writer, but a mind as strongly thematic as his could hardly have made a fragmentary writer. He liked to take some event, in all its local circumstances, and weave around it his kind of logical reverie until the event stood fixed for us in its universal relations and validity. For he believed, and said repeatedly, that all the essential factors of European civilization, all recognizable universal values are the products of local circumstances. And he saw it as the special mission of French

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thought, that is to say his own mission, to have and nurture in every circumstance "the sense of the universal."

Refections on the World Today is, I believe, the fourth volume of his work to appear in this country over a period of twenty years. It is a collection of addresses, prefaces, essays on politics, history, dictatorship, freedom, progress, France, and the fall of Europe generally. Anyone who knows something of Valéry's work will not expect to find here any usual treatment of these subjects. What he will find is the happily formulated insights and articulate attitudes of an important poet and highly civilized man discoursing after a lifetime of meditation on these same subjects. It is no doubt Valéry's main limitation as a prose writer that his interest and value lie too narrowly in the expression of particular insights and attitudes, brilliant and rewarding as these nearly always are. It is with the intention of giving the reader some sense of this poet's perspective on the world, of the depths and distances in his book, that I have risked heading these remarks with the sort of Mark Twain translation of the book's French title.

I think it may be said that Valéry had a method of meditation. His little discourses have the closely argued texture of a sermon of Donne: he announces as a text some perception, some product of his insight, and then proceeds to a close examination of its meaning, to a logical, frequently philological, analysis of the possibilities it offers to action and practical application. Language for Valéry was a precision instrument capable of bringing different fields of knowledge together at their critical points to precipitate new ideas. His conception of creative thought strongly recalls Whitehead's remark that "in our most theoretical moods we may be nearest to our most practical applications."

Valéry persistently identified man's destiny with the destiny of man's mind. It was his constant practice in writing to set the mind up in full view, in an arrangement of images, so as to watch the effect upon it of such forces as politics, war, or the progress of science. He then judged these forces, judged all history in fact according to its influence on man's mind. The plight of the mind in the present world is the theme that unifies these scattered essays. But man's mind is not only acted upon by history, it acts of course upon history in turn. And this accounts for another of Valéry's ruling perceptions about the world today. We are living an extraordinary adventure, he says. "The modern world is assuming the shape of man's mind. Man has sought in nature all the means and powers that are necessary to make the things around him as unstable, volatile, and mobile as himself, as admirable, as absurd, as disconcerting and prodigious as his own mind. But mind cannot

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see ahead and cannot foresee itself. We can foresee neither our dreams nor our projects, we can scarcely foresee anything but our own reactions. If, therefore, we imprint the form of our mind on the human world, the world becomes all the more unforeseeable and assumes the mind's disorder." It was this thoroughly rational pessimism, and no simple sign of the times, that made Valéry say in 1938: "The chances of a conflict are . . . frightfully multiplied. The instability of the world equilibrium is extreme. No one can any longer flatter himself that he can foresee. The greatest statesmen and the most profound minds can calculate nothing. An unforeseen invention can change overnight all the conditions of economic or military power. . . . " He remarked that the profoundest thoughts of Machiavelli or Richelieu would have today about the reliability of a stock market tip.

Valéry saw the skeleton of politics. He believed European politics had failed to live up to the advances of European thought in other fields. "Indeed, the very person who is able to think about physics or biology with instruments of thought comparable with instruments of precision, continues to think politically by means of impure terms, variable notions, and illusory metaphors." European man, he said, has thrown into politics all the instincts, idols, regrets, avarice, meaningless words, everything science and the arts have rejected.

Perhaps Valéry's least successful remarks are those concerning the writing of history. Americans who have read at least Henry Adams will be likely to find his strictures hardly justified and his tone of smug originality a little provincial.

When an admirer of André Gide recently remarked to him that he was the greatest living French writer, Gide replied: "Yes, since the death of Valéry." I doubt that Valéry will ever have in America anything like his European, to say nothing of his French reputation. That such a writer, better known to the general public for the difficulty and obscurity of his work than for any other feature of it, should rise to the position of public importance he held in France and throughout Europe (for example, as a delegate to the League of Nations) is puzzling to Americans. They forget that nothing is more generally felt in Europe than that Europe's fate is irrevocably tied up with the fate of ideas. And this is true not only of European intellectuals; it is something felt at the level of superstition by large populations. Nothing else about America horrifies Europeans more than our distrust of ideas and our apparent determination, in politics for example, to get along without them. Now Paul Valéry expressed constantly in his work, and fully in his person, this European devotion to ideas and the mind. And he rose

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to his eminence in France less because of any general understanding or popularity of his work than because he identified himself, to the point of symbol, with the life of thought, with the *idea* of Europe. In a constantly recurring system of images, Valéry saw Europe as the "brain" of the world, France as the "brain" of Europe, Paris as the "brain" of France, and beyond much doubt, in the latter part of his life, himself at the top of this pyramid.

We may hardly expect Valéry's book to revive the uses of meditation as a mode of political thought, for of all habits of mind that is surely the one most out of practice. And yet, as Valéry used it, this habit produced insights not only of startling pertinence but general enough in their validity to look prophetic. He wrote this in 1926:

> Europe will be punished for her policy. She will be deprived of wine, beer, and liquors. And other things. . . .
>
> Europe obviously aspires to be governed by an American committee. Her entire policy is aimed toward that end.
>
> Not knowing how to shake off our history, we shall be delivered from it by happy peoples who have none or next to none. It is the happy peoples who will impose their good fortune upon us.

I have saved mention of the matter of translation to the last because I think it is too important to be passed over in a single compliment to the translator. Mr. Scarfe, an English poet, has given us a fairly careful and lucid text that reads not at all like a translation. It is in various ways an excellent job, but I do want to offer one counter remark. His prose is often closer to Auden than to a possible English Valéry. The sly turns and involutions of Valéry's oversimple-looking prose may be impossible—or even undesirable?—in English. But I wish Mr. Scarfe had been stouter in resisting the temptation to turn figures of speech into abstractions and straighten out Valéry's language toward the commonplace. These are just the changes that risk damaging a writer's meaning most, even to destroying his character as a writer.

Jackson Mathews

MAN AND MACHINE

MECHANIZATION TAKES COMMAND: A Contribution to Anonymous History. By Siegfried Giedion. Oxford. $12.50.

"For the historian there are no banal things," Dr. Giedion remarks. Everything has meaning, if we have the wit to see it. There is

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a unity of culture allowing us to read its meaning as well in its parlor furniture as in its parliaments. It is in this historical spirit, the spirit of Goethe, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Spengler, that the author has undertaken his investigation of "anonymous history," of those prosaic tools, objects, and functions, so largely ignored, the mechanization of which has altered the quality of our lives.

It is no surprise that the author of this book, which has to do with a development chiefly exemplified and farthest advanced in America, should be a German-educated Swiss. From German thought Dr. Giedion got his essential notion of the organic unity of culture, without which his subject matter would remain a curiosity. A Swiss, native of a technologically advanced country where craft traditions nevertheless still flourish and the horrors of industrialism have been wonderfully mitigated, Dr. Giedion is able to look with a critical eye on things so familiar to us that we hardly see them. Switzerland, moreover, birthplace of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Arnold Rikli, and others, has a tradition of criticism of the "unnaturalness" of civilization, and Dr. Giedion continues it in his book.

It becomes very plain in its pages that our kind of mechanical age, though it lacks a unifying style in the sense that there have been Roman, Gothic, or Baroque ages, nevertheless does have a common quality. This quality, which has its material basis in mass production, is kitsch. Thus, in a fascinating chapter on the mechanization of bread-making, the author describes how the debasement of the bread product and bread tastes went hand in hand with the rise of mass-production methods, until we have the loaf of bread of today: soft, dazzlingly white, saccharine, tasteless, absolutely uniform, brightly packaged, and in twenty-four hours' time "outmoded" and unsalable. This debased taste in bread is the *same* debased taste catered to by the mass-produced popular arts; the contemporary loaf of bread has the *same* properties as the contemporary best seller.

What Dr. Giedion calls the "devaluation of bread" is least advanced in those countries where bread-making was early transferred from the home to local bakeries, encouraging the growth of a craft tradition among the bakers and a taste in the public that could discriminate among the products of the various bakeries. The devaluation of bread is most advanced in this country and Canada, where bread-making persisted longest in the home and then passed almost directly into the hands of large producers. That is, the baking of bread—like the American economy itself—passed from a primitive to an advanced stage, skipping the craft; and bread tastes—like so much else—passed from the unedu-

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cated but quite healthy "folk" stage almost directly over into kitsch.

Virtually every sphere of living tends to be debased by mechanization. Dr. Giedion aptly distinguishes between true comfort and the conveniences provided by mechanical ingenuity. Convenience (kitsch is above all a convenience) displaces comfort. Apartment-living is rarely comfortable, though mechanization is making it more convenient every day. The act of eating is mechanically transformed to render it convenient too; at the winding counters of such monstrosities as Chock Full O' Nuts, a mechanized consumption line is operated at furious speed, day in and day out cramming the same soggy sandwiches and pie into the "blind mouths" that offer themselves at five-minute intervals. In a chapter on the bath—equivalent to a short universal history of that institution—Dr. Giedion describes its transformation from a social ceremony of "regeneration" into a private ablutionary convenience of today. Our civilization elected to dispense with the social and "regenerative" functions of the bath in the measure that the need for them increased; for tedium, staleness, and hebetude have become the inevitable concomitants of metropolitan life.

One of the profoundest consequences of mechanization has been its transformation of the whole world of objects within which we move. Objects (taken in the broadest possible sense), possessions, in a primitive or craft system of manufacture were also symbols embodying spiritual values, and were cherished for this reason. Mass production stripped the object of all save its use value. This disenchantment of the object represented a great spiritual loss and is responsible for the bleakness of much of modern life; nothing less, I think, than a complete transformation of society can invest the object with a new symbolism.

I therefore cannot quite share Dr. Giedion's optimism when he concludes his pioneer study with the assertion that the nonmechanistic *Weltanschauung* of twentieth-century science and art heralds the end of mechanization. Though Dr. Giedion is the first to attempt a detailed consideration of mechanization on historical principles, he has a tendency, throughout the book, to see his subject in history only in terms of superficial *Weltanschauungen* (the eighteenth century represents "universalism," etc.). History is not only a matter of *Weltanschauungen* but also of the clash of social forces; mechanization was and is deeply involved in this clash and its future will be decided by it.

Martin Greenberg

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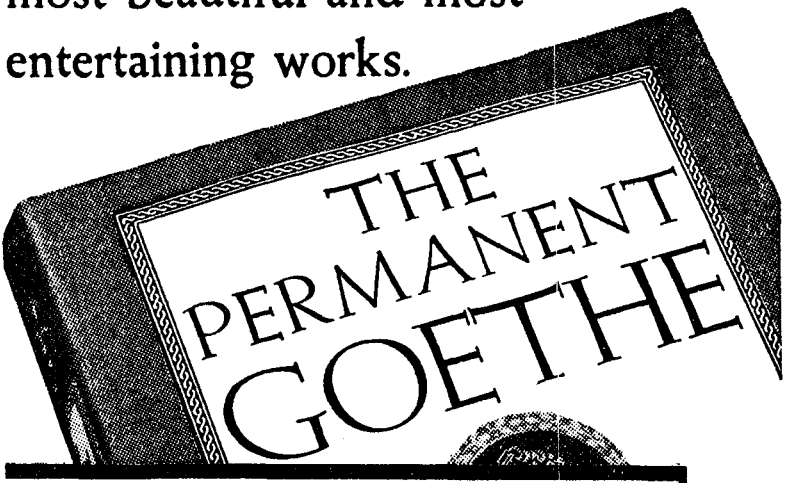

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VARIETY

THE RELIGIOUS NOVEL AND THE DETECTIVE STORY

The religious revival so often bespoken by clergymen, industrial psychologists, personnel managers, jurists, educators, historians, generals, statesmen, and politicians has perhaps already and unexpectedly overtaken us in literature. And its epiphany is not the religious novel strictly so called, but the detective story.

If it be contended that the detective story is a low form of literature, it does not follow that the genre is unsuited to be the vehicle of the "etherialization" that Arnold J. Toynbee so lengthily invokes. On the contrary. Whence shall revival come if not from the "internal proletariat" in the house of fiction? This is not the first case of an epiphany in a manger.

Our thesis will be clearer if we look first at the religious novel in its three typical forms: as the novel of *salvation,* the novel of the *sanctified person,* and the novel of the *savior.* These are technical terms, and the things they mean are not always what they seem. The sanctified person may be either positive or negative to sanctity, that is, may be either saint or sinner; the savior may be visible or invisible; but there is only one kind of salvation, and that is from guilt. *Pilgrim's Progress* is the great and beautiful paradigm of them all.

Today the novel of salvation would be represented by *Pilgrim's Progress'* most bastard child, Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge;* the novel of negative sanctity might be represented by Sinclair Lewis' *Elmer Gantry* and of positive sanctity by Georges Bernanos' *Joy;* the novel of the savior visible by Robert Graves's *King Jesus* and of the savior invisible by Mann's *Joseph* series. Besides these there are miscellaneous categories, such as The Travelogue of the Textile Neurosis (Lloyd Douglas' *The Robe*); and, of the day before yesterday, Tristram Shandy Among the Essenes (George Moore's *The Brook Kerith*); but these are only in a secondary (that is, a promotional) sense religious novels, and need not detain us.

Of religious novels some are good; and some are horrid; some have gone to market and some have stayed in Hollywood. But why have they all, collectively and individually, failed to bring about a religious revival? The reason is to be sought in Professor Toynbee's *field of "mimesis,"* where the varieties of religious experience, even the garden varieties, commonly grow. *There has been a failure of mimesis.* The sad fact is that for some time now the hero of the religious novel is a hero

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without a following. It is ever so long since the girls of *Little Women* played Pilgrim's Progress up and down the stairs; and almost that long since the young lad (later Lord) Allenby stored up in his youthful unconscious the grand strategy of Mr. Christian for use (according to Allenby's biographer, Wavell) in the Palestine Campaign of the First World War. And as far as thought can reach we cannot imagine anybody ever again wanting to play Tyrone Power on his way to the Celestial City.

But the religious novel's failure was the detective story's opportunity. For the careers of the criminal *and* the detective provide a direct, universal, and irresistible challenge to participation by the reader. Everybody, in other words, has played the game of cops and robbers; and things being what they are, *everybody must play it.* The game went metaphysical, and the detective story became the authentic religious novel—more than that, the passion play—of today. In whodunits are now to be found, suitably disguised as in a parable and stripped bare of all sectarian refinements, all the possible religious themes and all the theological problems that we have any time for.

At the center of every detective story lies the prime theological problem: original sin.

The story begins one day when the garden of the world lies at peace. Time hangs heavy over the detective's desk but because the categories of time and mortality have not yet entered the world. The stage, is set for "Man's first disobedience"; and the first stage of Disobedience, as De Quincey has shown in his frustrated essay apropos, is murder.

The one who will do it is Everyman.

Who will find him? The police take time; and they bungle. We may think of the cops' phase of the cosmic drama as the Phase of the Bungling of Time. But beyond the Bungling of Time lies the Fulfillment of Time.

If the regular police are the Old Morality, representing the Law, the hero detective is the New Morality, representing Grace. The

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principle of him may be operative in a cop or a member of the D.A.'s staff, but we see him better, as we see him most often, when we see him clean, working independently of the regular police and sometimes, temporarily, against them. Never forget, however, that the hero detective comes not to abolish the law but to fulfill it.

Between the hero detective and the cops there is an identity of aim, but there is a difference of means and of motive. The identical aim is to find the murderer, and to repristinate the cosmic order as of before the Fall! No small task this; and no wonder there can be some differences in the choice and evolution of means. Some aim to "produce god from the machine"; and this is your laboratory detective, omniscient no less than any other, but with a manual and technological bent. Some will reason god from the singing bone; and these are your scholastic giants: Nero Wolfe and Father Brown, straight from the tradition of Thomas Aquinas. But the main difference in means, as between the hero detective will *be* a thief an incarnational difference. The cops will set a thief to catch a thief (that is, a murderer); but the hero detective will *be* a thief to catch one. He or his assistant will. And whenever a policeman has yielded to this principle, we may know and remember that he has yielded to the principle of incarnation.

Above all there is the difference in motive.

It is not out of vengeance that the hero detective seeks the murderer, nor because he is licensed or employed to do so; but he does so *vocationally*, or by way of election and dedication. The hero detective has a call. Often, if not always, he is so saintly shy about his call that, like Nero Wolfe, he will protest that he does it only for cash. But we, you and I, know that he protests too much. We know that he does what he does because the sign of it was laid upon him from birth. We know that for this he was conceived, and for this born, and that his fate and his ethos are thus and not otherwise. He would not have it otherwise;

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though all the seven deadly temptations of the world pass before him in their salivant allure; and neither would we. Once in a while a true detective, even though he happen to be a cop, will confess that this is so. Thus the noble speech of Ngaio Marsh's half-noble Alleyn (C.I.D., Scotland Yard, British) to his beloved recently.

In the quest for the murderer your true detective must suspect everybody. Theologically and sociologically, how could he otherwise? "In Adam's fall we sinned all." "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in the underworld, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there would thy hand lead me, and thy right hand would hold me" (Pss. 139:7-10). The universality of suspicion merely corresponds, theologically speaking, to the fact that the *atonement* (if, as, and when) is for everybody. Therefore our sigh of relief, of gladness or recognition when the detective points the finger is commingled with disappointment and with the trace of a bitter metaphysical chagrin. For we cannot wholly believe in our atonement until we have *suffered* it. If we, who are guilty as hell, are let off this time, that is not quite as satisfactory as it ought to be.

Therefore also, (*a*) the multiplicity of crime in the true detective story, not one murder but many; and (*b*) the insatiability of your true reader. For expiation, as Freud so brilliantly and Reik so woodenly have both pointed out (*Moses and Monotheism,* and *The Unknown Murderer*), means *repetition* of the crime.

Therefore, finally, the mystical need of the hero-detective (from time to time) to undergo the fate of the criminal; and by the same token the profound urgency of the regular police (from time to time) to sock the detective, *and to sock him hard.* Then and only then has the hero detective earned the right himself (or through his assistant) to punish the face and body of the suspect, before the arrest. Then is the deposition of the shaken body of the criminal (*Boomerang*; Hammett; etc.) a shattering *pietà.*

This is the detective's ultimate vocation: up ladders of love and identification to help us through the agony of the garden of crime, and thereby to achieve our vicarious atonement. But his sanctity is deeper than his vocation; it lies in himself. Immune to bribery, helping the widow and the orphan, sharp with the sharpness of his skill, which is that of a bloodhound, a boxer, and a judge, holy with his calling and tragic in his detachment from all other men, Galahad is he. If his strength is as the strength of ten it is because his heart is pure. His quest for a

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crime's solution is the quest for a *grail.*

An injustice was therefore done when a current practitioner, Raymond Chandler, unaware of the religious implications of his art, once in a magazine article dared to characterize the detective hero as merely your perfect gentleman, *sans peur et sans reproche.* And to this defective claim the answer and corrective were long ago given by the distinguished G. K. Chesterton who showed, in *The Man Who Was Thursday,* that the prince of detectives was God.

And here we, with Chesterton, have touched on the secret of the detective story's peculiar popularity and of its liturgical charm, even when the music is bad and the message thick. For the only truly popular literature is one that expresses the metaphysical needs of mankind. These, though less acute than man's material needs, are far more chronic and profound. And of all the muses none is more lovely than our lady metaphysics. Only, now that she has become a policewoman, 'tis pity she's a bore.

Henry M. Rosenthal

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CORRESPONDENCE

MISS HERBST AND MISS PORTER

Sirs:

Allow me to congratulate you on the May PR, an excellent issue. I like Sartre's piece and particularly Josephine Herbst's "Miss Porter and Miss Stein." Miss Herbst's article is literary criticism at its best, clear, succinct, unlabored, placing its subject in the right context of ideas so that it stands out in uncluttered contour. It is quite true, as she says, that Miss Porter's facts on Miss Stein "are assembled with wit and presented in flawless prose" but that there is something "wrong with the expression." What is wrong, it would appear, is that Miss Porter has been keeping company with ideas which she has not examined carefully. Sections of her article on Gertrude Stein in *Harper's* come dangerously close to the irresponsibilities of *Mona Lisa's Moustache* and the strange double talk of the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art on "unintelligibility" in modern painting. Miss Herbst has done Miss Porter a service in pointing out that some of her ideas in the Stein article may lead her into fields where she would not be very happy to find herself.

Holger Cahill

New York City

NOTICE

Sirs:

On the back cover of your April issue, in an advertisement for the books of Kenneth Patchen, I was startled to see a rather fantastic statement printed over my name, and would ask you to publish this notice that it is neither authentic nor authorized. While I have a very great liking for the best of Patchen's poetry, I would certainly reserve the comparison with Whitman for men of the stature of Pound, Eliot, Crane, Cummings, and Williams. Patchen is still in his thirties; he has time to grow, and I think he will.

James Laughlin

Lausanne, Switzerland

THE ATONAL TRAIL

Sirs:

I have been extremely disappointed on reading Mr. Nicolas Nabokov's Communication on "atonality" in the May PR; disappointed, because it seems to me that the publication of this article negates the impression of strong, healthy, forward-looking musical activity produced by previous communications in these pages. . . .

First I was amazed by Mr. Nabokov's reference to the "detached attitude" and "cloak of impartiality" affected by Mr. Leibowitz. Mr. Nabokov should know that the essence of the existentialist attitude towards life (which is, as practical experience has shown, as applicable to music as to any other field of endeavor) is *engagement total*—"total involvement"—which implies anything *but* detachment; for one obviously does not enter into the "engagement" or battle of life without choosing sides. . . . Mr. Leibowitz does not, and does not want to, present his views in this article as those of the musicologist, the scholar who judicially weighs everything "after the fact." . . .

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Rather, he is here the composer, the conductor, the all-around practical musician who thinks, feels, and experiences his reactions to the contemporary scene in most immediate fashion. . . . Judicial proof requires another sort of article, buttressed with musical examples and painstaking analyses. There exist periodicals for the presentation of such material; and those who are really interested in such treatment of Schönberg and his school will know where to find articles and books of this judicial kind (including some by Mr. Leibowitz himself). . . . A piece like Mr. Leibowitz's letter from Hollywood is supposed to stimulate discussion of some very important problems, not to end the argument!

Naturally any answer to an article such as Mr. Nabokov's lays itself open to similar criticism on the grounds of "arbitrariness." But . . . let me set forth a few misconceptions of historical fact which seem to have invaded Mr. Nabokov's thinking.

1) The "revival" or "rehash" (to use Mr. Nabokov's own terms) of the cliché about the essentially and immovably "Central European" nature of twelve-tone music is peculiarly infelicitous at this time. The very fact that young composers (some of whom had not even studied with Schönberg) *could* turn to the twelve-tone technique in France dominated by Stravinsky, Boulanger, and *Les Six*, in traditionally isolationist America (and in England and Italy as well, which Mr. Nabokov does not mention) is sufficient indication that this is simply not so. . . .

2) It is rather surprising to read that the devotees of Schönberg attempt to present his music to the public as the product of "a 'new' system rather than a final step in a harmonic evolution." The confusion of terminology and concepts here is extreme. . . . I have never known a *real* Schönberg devotee who was not profoundly aware of the essentially *traditional* nature of Schönberg's art, of its logical connections with the past. Schönberg himself has emphasized this relationship with the past on every conceivable occasion; it is implicit in his teaching, which, resting on a profoundly conservative basis, has proved itself capable of bringing forth musicians who solve the same eternal problems of music that confronted Monteverde, Bach, or Brahms, but who solve them in terms appropriate to their own time. All this is set forth so clearly in Schönberg's own theoretical treatises that further restatement would appear superfluous. Thus it is seen that there is no question, in the mind of anyone who really understands what the twelve-tone method is all about, of presenting it as a "new step" *rather than* (!) the *end* (!!) of an evolution. It is simply a new step which represents, as far as we know today, the furthest point that such an evolution has yet reached; not by any means the furthest point that it could possibly reach. . . .

3) The argument that twelve-tone music is *per se* "mechanistic" recurs with monotonous regularity. But one seeks in vain for a convincing explanation of *why* it should be more "mechanical" to expand tonality into "pantonality" (the fundamental incorrectness of the word "atonality" has been so often demonstrated that it really

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ought to be discarded) in the twentieth century than to expand modality into tonality in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

4) Mr. Nabokov deplores the conclusion of Mr. Leibowitz that the later career of Stravinsky represents a consistent decline. But what work of Stravinsky is it that Mr. Nabokov mentions here with special respect and admiration? Not something written in the last decade—but precisely *Le Sacre du Printemps!* . . . The "great composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" whom Mr. Nabokov invokes in defense of Stravinsky's latter-day conventionalities *began* with the conventions of their time and gradually, as they became more mature, found the way to their characteristic innovations. To put it in the crudest terms, they started as conservatives and ended as radicals. This was the process followed, too, by the great composers of the nineteenth century—and, in our day, by Schönberg, who confirms such a view in one of his favorite paradoxes: "I am a conservative who was forced to become a radical." In the case of Stravinsky (and of a disturbingly large number of our other renowned contemporaries) the process seems to have been reversed; they begin as radicals and end as conservatives. Is there not then legitimate ground for the suspicion that their original "radicalism" started from basically unsound premises and that thus their decline is inevitable?

Or does the music culture of the twentieth century really want to claim as its special merit the feat of having reversed, for good and all, the natural development of composers? Are we required to give our allegiance to those who (as Artur Schnabel once said) begin as field-marshals and end as privates?

Dika Newlin

Westminster, Maryland

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